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The HEBREW TEXT Considered;

Being OBSERVATIONS on

The NOVELTY and SELF-INCONSISTENCY

OF THE

MASORETIC SCHEME

OF

Pointing the Sacred Hebrew Scriptures.

The Hebrew Text Conſidered;

Being Observations on

The Novelty and Self-Inconsistency

OF THE

MASORETIC SCHEME

OF

Pointing the Sacred Hebrew Scriptures:

With a Reaſonable Account of

The Author's Plan of Reading and Conſtructing

THE

Scriptural Hebrew without Points.

FOUNDED UPON

An attentive Conſideration of the Genius of the Hebrew Text itſelf, unpointed as at firſt written;

The obvious Dictates of Nature;

The known Uſage of Language in general;

AND

The unexceptionable Authority of the Antients.

By NORMAN SIEVWRIGHT, A.M.

A Preſbyter of the Church, and Miniſter to the Authorized Epiſcopal Congregation in Brechin.

"Teneamus igitur hoc fundamentum & in legendo, & in ſcribendo, "& pronuntiando, veterem Hebræorum uſum in Hebræa lingua "ſequendum eſſe." ——

P. Martinii Gram. Hebr. TEXNOA. Page 47.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

THE HONOURABLE

RICHARD TREVOR

LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM.

My LORD,

AMONGST the many laudable attempts made in this kingdom, and, by the bleſſing of God, favoured with the deſired ſucceſs, to elucidate the Holy Scriptures, I have been induced, from motives

of duty, to offer my mite, by engaging, in the following undertaking, to do juſtice in ſome tolerable meaſure to the ſtriking ſimplicity and uniformity of the Scriptural Hebrew, conſidered in it's original ſtate, unpointed, as it was left upon record by the inſpired Writers of it. The deſign, I can truly ſay, is well intended, though perhaps not executed in the manner ſuitable to its importance, which, however, the ſacred Hebrew books themſelves muſt determine.

I have ſtudied conciſeneſs as much as I poſſibly could, that I might avoid giving unneceſſary trouble to the ſtudent, and every thing that might in the leaſt degree tend to deter even the moſt ſcrupulous from the ſtudy of the ſacred Hebrew language. It will be

be eaſily ſeen, that I have had immediate recourſe to the ſacred Hebrew books, and to them only as received by the antients, to illuſtrate the truth of the ſubſequent obſervations; ſo that I can with the greater propriety preſume in the humbleſt manner to recommend this work to your Lordſhip's countenance and protection; which I am encouraged to entreat, from a real ſenſe of your Lordſhip's readineſs to protect and encourage the cauſe of Divine Truth; and from a firm perſuaſion that the eſteem and veneration, juſtly due to your Lordſhip's office and name, will induce all candid lovers of truth to put a juſt eſtimation upon the importance of it, when making it's way into the world through the favour of ſo eminent a patronage.

 I remain

I remain, under the moſt lively ſentiments of duty and eſteem,

My Lord,

Your Lordſhip's

Moſt faithful,

Moſt obedient,

And moſt humble Servant,

Nor. Sievwright.

The

THE AUTHOR TO THE PUBLIC.

THE following diſcourſe is intended as a preliminary introduction to a grammar of the Scriptural Hebrew Language, founded upon a new (though in reality the oldeſt) yet obvious and reaſonable plan; of which plan, the ſubſtance is here propoſed (but illuſtrated fully in my grammar by quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures themſelves, and from them only, in every inſtance of primeval formation) and humbly ſubmitted to the conſideration of every well-meaning enquirer after truth. Theſe obſervations I have been adviſed to publiſh, previous to the publication of my grammar, that the world may ſee the reaſonableneſs (I might ſay, the neceſſity) of ſuch an undertaking, and be convinced that no impoſition is deſigned.

As an affair of this importance cannot be too carefully examined, nor too ſe-

rioufly

riouſly conſidered, I would not have it believed that the following obſervations reſt upon the approbation of my own judgment alone. I have the Satisfaction to ſay, that I would not preſume to preſent them to the light, unleſs approved by better judges than I can pretend to be. Sufficient in the mean time I reckon it, to mention the opinion of my good friend, the reverend and learned Doctor Hunt, Regius Profeſſor in Oxford; who in his kind letter to me on this ſubject (in which alſo, agreeably to his known goodneſs and ingenuity, he has laid me under obligations of gratitude by mentioning my inaccuracies which he found in my firſt manuſcript, but which, I hope, my readers will now find rectified) is pleaſed to expreſs himſelf in theſe words: "On my "ſecond peruſal of your preliminary diſ-"courſe (ſince I wrote to the biſhop) I "was particularly pleaſed with your ac-"count of the *vowels*, p. * 37, 38, &c. "and think this among other things, "well worthy to be conſidered. It is "putting this much controverted ſubject "on a rational, ſenſible footing." This

* Correſponding to Section iii. Argument 3, &c. of the Treatiſe as now printed.

teſtimony

teſtimony from ſo learned and eminent a gentleman ought to have it's own proper weight in the eſtimation of every conſidering and well-meaning perſon. However the world may judge, I can truly ſay, my principal intention is, to remove a ſtumbling-block out of the way of eaſy acceſs to the fountain of divine knowledge, and, in ſo doing, to contribute ſomething to the honour of truth, before the "night "come, when no man can work:" and with this view I offer this undertaking to the world, equally regardleſs of popular applauſe which I neither deſire nor can deſerve, and of unjuſt cenſure which cannot affect or diſturb me. Let an inſpection into the ſacred Hebrew text *unpointed* (to which alone I am willing to refer myſelf, and upon which I found all my obſervations and grammatical rules, preferably to all other authorities upon earth) determine whether or not I am in the right.

CON-

It is hoped that the judicious and candid will be pleaſed, before peruſal, to excuſe and rectify the following ERRATA.

Page 12. *line* 12 of the Note, cloſe the Parentheſis after, but)—p. 14. at the top of col. 4. *r.* Read by S. Jerom —*ibid.* l. 3. *r.* Gen. x. 3.—*ibid.* col. 2. *r.* Hhàtſarmaveth.—*ibid.* col. 1. l. 9. inſert the Point *Tzere* (◌ֵ) below, and *Dageſch* in the initial thus בּ —*ibid.* l. 14. *dele* the *accent*, and inſert the Point *Chirek breve* (◌ִ) below the initial מִ.—p. 23. l. 16. *r.* miſſed.—p. 30. l. 2. Arguments.—p. 55. l. 3. *r. fact.*—p. 59. l. 1. *r.* the divinity ſchools.—p. 70. l. 4. *r.* Gen. vi. 1.—p. 76. l. 2. *r.* willfully blindfolded.—p. 84. l. 12. *r.* Lev. xxiii. 24.—*ibid.* l. 16. *r.* מַעֲשֵׂר —p. 85. l. 7. *r.* Gen. iv. 26.—p. 86. l. 11. inſert the Point *Chirek breve* (◌ִ) below the initial לִ —p. 87. l. 9. *r.* Lev. xi —p. 89. l. 19. inſtead of 13. *r.* 3.—p. 92. l. 8. inſert the Point *Tzere* (◌ֵ) below the penult יֵ of the example.—*ibid.* l. 15. 16. *r. thedareſh* (*all in Italics*)—p. 93. l. 7. from the bottom, *dele* Dageſch in the initial תּ.—p. 94. l. 3. cloſe the ſecond Heb. conſonant into ח (*HHeth*) —*ibid.* laſt line inſert *Tzere* (◌ֵ) below בֵ.—p. 95. l. 12. *r.* Num. xxiii. 13. —p. 101. l. 4. from the bottom, *r.* palpably.—p. 103. l. 6. *r.* homogeneous, (*with Comma following*)—p. 108. l. 6. from the bottom, *r. letter.*—p. 109. l. 2. from the bottom, *r. letters.*—p. 110. l. 3. from the bottom, cloſe the Parentheſis after, expected).—p. 112. laſt line, *r.* ſufficient.—p. 113. l. 1. *r.* regarded;—p. 120. l. 16. *r.* letters as repreſented.—p. 125. l. 12. *r. inahhamnu.*—p. 145. l. 16. *r.* compared with Num. xxxi. 21.—p. 149. line 12. r. q. (i. e. quaſi) *hid,*—*ibid.* l. 13. *r.* Eccleſ. vii. 17.—p. 152. l. 12. *r.* with which they are.

CONTENTS.

SECTION I.

Arguments *againſt the pretended antiquity of the Maſoretic Points*, concluſive.

SECTION II.

Arguments *in favour of the Maſoretic Pointing*, not concluſive.

SECTION III.

The learned Dr. Prideaux's opinion with regard to the authority *and* neceſſity *of the Maſoretic Punctuation, conſidered.*

SECTION IV.

The Maſoretic Scheme, of Quieſcent Letters, *and aſſigning* different powers *to one and the ſame letter, of the Hebrew alphabet, a groſs corruption of the Hebrew Language.*

SEC-

SECTION V.

The fundamentals of the natural and conſiſtent reading, conſtructing, and interpretation of the Scriptural Hebrew, agreeably to the plan which appears to have been adopted by the antients, and which is agreeable to the genius and uniformity of the language. With intereſting remarks upon paſſages wrong tranſlated.

OBSER-

OBSERVATIONS, &c.

IN the ancient canonical Hebrew ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament, dictated in the Hebrew language from the mouth of God himſelf, and in that language written by pious men divinely inſpired, we have an ineſtimable treaſure of the moſt important knowledge. In them is exhibited, not only the beſt and moſt ancient hiſtory of intereſting facts relative to the primeval ſtate of the world in general, and of man in particular; not only a comprehenſive ſyſtem of divine morality; and a revelation, in part, of the will of God to his creature, *man*, and of *man's* duty to his creator, his neighbour, and himſelf; but alſo in theſe divine ſcriptures is exhibited (by the method of ſacrifical worſhip which God had preſcribed, firſt to the patriarchs as well before as after the univerſal deluge, and afterwards renewed in a more particular manner to their lineal deſcendents, the Iſraelites; by various ſignificant rites, types, figures, and

apt ſimilitudes; but, above all, by the ſpirit and word of prophecy now accompliſhed) ſuch a clear and undeniable teſtimony of the divine original of the chriſtian diſpenſation, as perplexes and confounds the unbelieving *Jew*, whilſt it gives the moſt ſolid and ſatisfactory comfort and peace of mind to the well-meaning and conſidering *Chriſtian*. "In theſe writings we "may contemplate all the ſteps of pro- "vidence, relating to the ſalvation and "redemption of mankind, in the ſeveral "*(earlieſt)* ages of the world, and, by a "compariſon of all the parts, may diſ- "cern that CHRIST was indeed the "END of the law, and of all the pro- "miſes made to the fathers: that all the "deliverances given by God to his peo- "ple, were but ſhadows, and, as it were, "an earneſt of the great deliverance he "intended to give by his Son: That all "the ceremonials of the law were repre- "ſentations of the ſubſtance of the goſ- "pel: That the Aaronical ſacrifices and "prieſthood were figures of better things "to come." There is moreover ſuch an intimate connexion betwixt the inſpired Hebrew writings and the goſpels, confirmed by a continued chain of revelations,

ons, that the one can be but imperfectly underſtood without the real fundamental knowledge of the other. Without this knowledge one cannot ſo fully perceive the beauty and uniformity of the grand ſcheme of Providence in relation to man's happineſs, which has been opening by degrees from the very creation of the world, till at laſt, in the fullneſs of God's good appointed time, the WHOLE was fully diſplayed in the *incarnation*, *miniſtry*, *ſufferings*, *death*, *reſurrection*, and *aſcenſion* of the promiſed Meſſiah, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, " in whom dwelleth all the " fullneſs of the Godhead bodily (*a*)". And further, this knowledge (I will take it upon me to ſay) one cannot acquire with ſuch certainty, and to ſuch entire ſatisfaction, from tranſlations only of the ſacred Hebrew writings, as by having recourſe at the ſame time to the Hebrew language itſelf, in which, the inſpired writers under the Moſaic œconomy wrote thoſe ineſtimable records of divine truth, as I have already obſerved: for in that moſt ancient of all languages there are ſuch peculiar beauties, ſtrength, and majeſty of expreſſion, com-

(*a*) Coloſ. ch. ii. 8, 9. compared together.

municating at the ſame time an idea of the moſt engaging ſimplicity and rectitude of ſentiment, as no tranſlation whatever can come up to.

Dulciùs ex ipſis hauritur fontibus unda,
Oreque Divino puriùs imbibitur.

Now to the right underſtanding of the true primeval ſcriptural Hebrew (which I deſire I may be always underſtood to mean, when I at any time ſpeak of the Hebrew language) the moſt ſimple, natural, and radical reading and conſtruction of it in it's original purity, as writ *unpointed* by the inſpired writers, contribute remarkably. The chriſtian world has been long amuſed with a fancy that the Maſoretic method of reading and conſtructing the Hebrew by vowel-points and accents is as much of divine authority as the letters; with this only difference, that the letters were written, and the method of pointing delivered down by tradition. This the modern Jews boldly affirm, and claim the praiſe of preſerving ſuch a notable tradition, as they think (or would fain make us believe) it is. Their bold aſſertions however, with regard to this point, as well as many others that nearly

nearly affect the intereſts of religion, have been juſtly called in queſtion, and confuted by many very ſtrong arguments. But the Jews are proof againſt all the force of reaſon, they can ſtick ſtiffly to the opinion they have once eſpouſed, and harden their foreheads againſt all conſequences. I need not flatter myſelf therefore, that any thing I can ſay in oppoſition to this ſcheme of theirs, will ſtartle them in the leaſt, or make any impreſſion upon them; but in any event, if I make the truth appear, it will always recommend itſelf to the acceptance of thoſe who are ſincerely diſpoſed to receive it.—But to the point,—in treating of which, I ſhall, in as few words as I can, ſum up the evidence adduced by learned men with regard to this pretended tradition, and illuſtrate the ſame by ſome remarks of my own, in order to ſet the truth of the matter in a ſtill clearer point of light.

It is allowed by all, that the inſpired Ezra wrote out the ancient Hebrew ſcriptures in the *character* in *which* we have them at this day, for the uſe of the Jews after their return from their captivity in Babylon. And that he (Ezra) added the preſent vowel-points, which we find in

the ſacred text, was boldly affirmed by the Jews of the diſperſion, till *Elias Levita*, a German Jew, wrote againſt it about the beginning of the reformation (*b*): ſince which time, that aſſertion has been much controverted. However, the Jews (*Elias* as well as others of them) ſeem to agree, that the *reading*, as now fixed by the vowel-points, in all the books of holy ſcripture, is the *true*, *genuine*, and *authentic reading*, as it came from the ſacred pen-men themſelves, and conſequently is as much of divine authority as the letters (*c*).—This is the *grand point* indeed!—for if we allow them the *reading*, we need not diſpute about either the forms of the vowel-points, nor the date of their inſertion into the ſacred books. I ſhall therefore firſt ſhew the evidence adduced *againſt* the *antiquity* of theſe points, and then conſider the *authenticity* of the *reading* itſelf as fixed by theſe points, *ſuch* as *it* is.

(*b*) Dr. Prid. Connec. Part I. pag. 462. (*c*) Pag. 463.

SECT-

SECTION I.

Arguments *againſt the pretended antiquity of the Maſoretic points*, concluſive.

THAT the preſent vowel-points, which we find in our Hebrew Bibles, are of modern date, may be proved by ſeveral concluſive arguments.

1. (*d*) "The ſacred books made uſe "of among the Jews in their ſynagogues "have ever been, and ſtill are, without "the vowel-points; which could not have "happened, had they been placed there "by Ezra, and conſequently been of the "ſame authority with the letters; for, had "they been ſo, they would certainly have "been preſerved in the ſynagogues with "the ſame care as the reſt of the text. "There can ſcarce any other reaſon be "given, why they were not admitted "thither, but that, when the holy ſcrip-"tures began firſt to be publickly read to "the people in their ſynagogues, there "were no ſuch vowel points then in being;

(*d*) Dr. Prid. Connec. Part I. pag. 464.

" and that when they afterwards came
" in uſe, being known to be a human
" invention, they were for that reaſon
" never thought fit to be added to thoſe
" ſacred copies, which were looked on as
" the true repreſentatives of the original;
" and therefore they have been ever kept
" with the ſame care in the ark, or ſacred
" cheſt, of the ſynagogue, as the original
" draught of the Law of Moſes antient-
" ly was in the ark, or ſacred cheſt, of
" the tabernacle, which was prepared for
" it; and they are ſtill ſo kept in the
" ſame manner among them even to this
" day.

2. " The antient various readings of the
" ſacred text, called Keri Cetib (*e*), are all
" about

(*e*) *Keri* (from קרא KARA, legere) ſignifies that which is *read*, and *Ketib* (from כתב CHATHAB, ſcribere,) that which is *written*. " For where there are any ſuch various " readings, the wrong reading," if we may credit the Jews, who, according to this pretence, and ſuch like, varniſh that known precept of theirs, Fili mi, magis attende ad verba ſcribarum, quam ad verba legis " is written in the " text, and that is called the Cetib; and the true reading " is written in the margin, and that is called the Keri."— The original of the Keri Cetib, according to the Jewiſh traditions, ſprung from the errors that had crept into the Hebrew text before, or during, the Babyloniſh captivity, which errors Ezra corrected.—

But it is not probable, there were ſuch errors before the days of Ezra, as it is pretended. We know that Joſiah, who

" about the letters, and none about the " vowel-points; which ſeems manifeſtly " to

who was a very pious prince, cauſed (amongſt other publick reformations) ſeveral copies of the Hebrew ſcriptures to be tranſcribed from the original authentic copy which Hilkiah found in the temple; and this was done but only a few years before the commencement of the captivity. " So that though, within a few years after, the ho- " ly city and temple were deſtroyed, and the authentic " copy of the law, which was laid up before the Lord, " was burnt and conſumed with them; yet by this time, " many copies both of the law and the prophets, and all " the other ſacred writings, were got into private hands, " who carried them with them into their captivity. That " Daniel had a copy of the holy ſcriptures with him in " Babylon, it is certain; for he quotes the law, (ſee Dan. " ch. ix. and 11th and 13th verſes) and alſo makes men- " tion of the prophecies of the prophet Jeremiah, (ſee Dan. " ch. ix. and 2d verſe) which he could not do, had he " never ſeen them. And in chap. vi. of Ezra it is " ſaid, that on the finiſhing of the temple in the 6th year " of Darius, the prieſts and the levites were ſettled in their " reſpective functions, according as it is written in the Law " of Moſes. But how could they do this according to the " written Law, if they had not copies of that law then a- " mong them?" (ſee Dr. Prideaux's Connec. part I. page 440, 441.) And if they had ſuch Copies, there is no reaſon why we ſhould allow ourſelves to imagine that they were ſo erroneous; as being carefully extracted from the original *ſine errore*-copy, not many years before the memory of the oldeſt men then alive; nay rather within the memory of every perſon who was carried away into the captivity. For Hilkiah the prieſt found the original copy of the Law in the houſe of the Lord, only in the eighteenth year of the reign of king Joſiah, who reigned in Judah one and thirty years; (ſee 2 Kings xxii. 3—8. and 2 Cron. xxxiv. 8—15.) In the fourth year of his ſon and ſucceſſor Jehoiakim, the captivity of Judah commenced, *i. e.* not above ſeventeen years after the holy ſcriptures began

to

" to prove, that the vowel-points were " not antiently in being," nor ſo old as even

to be copied out under Hilkiah's inſpection; but the land was not depopulated till the eleventh year of the reign of king Zedekiah, (2 Kings ch. xxv.) *i.e.* no more than thirty-five years after the *fine errore*-copy of the book of the law was found by Hilkiah; ſo that my conjecture above mentioned is *more* than *probable*. This being the caſe then, it is not even poſſible, in the ordinary courſe of things, that Ezra could find any errors (properly ſo called) in thoſe copies from which he cauſed others to be written out. But ſuppoſing he had found ſuch errors; he, who thoroughly underſtood the language, and the propriety of the Hebrew writing, could and would have corrected them in the text itſelf, without further help; (even as in like manner he illuſtrates many paſſages of the text, but not after the faſhion of Keri Cetib; ſee Dr. Prid. Connec. part. I. pag. 457, &c.) Neither was it conſiſtent with his character, as an inſpired writer, to eſtabliſh even the moſt diſtant appearance of various readings in the ſacred books: for the ſpirit of God always ſpeaks with a determinate uniformity of both *ſentiment* and *expreſſion*. Yet granting further, " that thoſe " various readings had been obſerved by Ezra himſelf in " the comparing thoſe copies he collated on this occaſion, " and were by him annexed in the margin, as corrections " of thoſe errors which he found in the text; it is certain, " thoſe could not be of that number which are now in " thoſe ſacred books that were written by himſelf, or taken " into the canon after his time; for there are Keri Cetibs " in them, as well as in the other books of the Hebrew " ſcriptures." (Dr. Prid. Connect. part. I. pag. 442.) I would aſk then, who corrected Ezra's books, and thoſe others that were received into the canon after his time? Or how can we acknowledge *his* capacity in correcting, *who himſelf* ſtood in need of being corrected? I am afraid this will terminate in an abſurdity, and an impious one too; however, it is no more than the common conſequence of all the arguments, &c. urged by the Jews againſt Chriſtians. For my part then, I will never put the credit of thoſe pretended corrections, and that of Ezra and common ſenſe

upon

even thoſe various readings "or elſe were "not then looked on as an authentic part "of

upon the ſame footing: I will rather acknowledge without the leaſt heſitation what plainly appears to me to be the truth of this matter, viz. that Ezra neither corrected, nor ſtood in need of being corrected himſelf. I cannot help it, though ſome of his bretheren according to the fleſh were, in after times, of a different opinion, when they began to render the word of God of none effect through the vanity of their traditions. But to come to a concluſion; it appears that the date of thoſe marginal corrections (I ſhould rather ſay, corruptions) is by many ages later than the days of Ezra; and that they could not reaſonably dare to ſhew themſelves, till ſome conſiderable time after the diſſolution of the Jewiſh polity, and the diſperſion of the Jews. For till that time, it was no difficulty to preſerve entire and undefaced the original manuſcripts which were writ out by Ezra and others under his eye, to which recourſe might have been had in all dubious caſes, relative to the ſcriptural Hebrew; though, in all probability, they and many more were loſt in the deſtruction of the temple and city of Jeruſalem by the Romans, and in the confuſions attending it. But when afterwards ſchools were erected by the diſperſed Jews in Babylonia and elſewhere, and when chriſtianity became every where triumphant over all the oppoſition that men or devils could raiſe againſt it, we may be ſure the Jews were not idle all the while; but rather than allow the goſpel of Chriſt any degree of credit amongſt men, as founded upon evidence deducible from the antient Hebrew ſcriptures, they (as their own caſe was deſperate) might endeavour to render doubtful, with all the colour of reaſon they could, even the reading of theſe divine records; in order to lay ſtumbling-blocks before chriſtians in the way of their acceſs to this precious evidence; and to prevent all exceptions, and make the pill go down, they were under a neceſſity to confine their whimſical notes (or pretended readings) to the margin, as doubtleſs they had ſagacity enough to perceive, that if they had preſumed to make any alterations in the text, the deſign of the

ſcheme

" of the text; for if they had, the vari-
" ations of theſe would certainly have been
" taken notice of, as well as thoſe of the
" letters."

" 3. The antient cabbaliſts draw none
" of their myſteries from the vowel-points,
" but all from the letters; which is an

ſcheme would be immediately detected, upon even a compariſon of the text (ſo manufactured) with the *Greek tranſlation* alone, which had ſubſiſted in credit for ſeveral ages, previous to the poſſibility of embarking in any ſuch attempts. But as far as they could go, they went; they had the daring impiety to repreſent the text as erroneous, though writ by inſpired men, to ſet up their own vain ſcribblings in its place, and then moſt abſurdly to aſcribe the whole to Ezra. The deſign of all this could be none other, but to bring into diſcredit the tranſlations, which they knew were poſterior to the days of Ezra, which were founded (not upon their pretended corrections in the margin, but (upon the original Hebrew text itſelf, and which ſerved to point out a ſure way to Chriſtians, whereby they can underſtand and illuſtrate the meaning of the Hebrew text, without having recourſe in any one reſpect to the authority of unbelieving Jews. This their dark and diabolical deſign the event fully declared in a very ſhort time; for the Jews no ſooner thought they could with any probability of ſucceſs impoſe the cheat upon the chriſtian world, than they endeavoured to put it in credit, by detracting from the character of the ſeptuagint verſion as far as they could, and ſetting up in its room other tranſlations (thoſe, viz. by Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus, which they thought would better ſerve their purpoſe. See Dr. Prid. Connec. part. II. book I. ſection 11.) But, bleſſed be God, we have diſcovered the impoſture of thoſe ravening wolves in ſheep's cloathing, who are not able to hurt us, nor impede our acceſs to the knowledge of the truth of God's antient revelations.

" argument,

" argument, either that theſe vowel-
" points were not in uſe in their time; or
" elſe were not then looked on, as an au-
" thentic part of the ſacred text; for had
" they then been ſo, theſe triflers would
" certainly have drawn myſteries from the
" one, as well as from the other, as the
" latter cabbaliſts have done."

" 4. If we compare with the preſent
" pointed Hebrew bibles, the verſion of
" the ſeptuagint, the Chaldee paraphraſes,
" the fragments of Aquila, Symmachus,
" and Theodotion, or the latin verſion of
" Jerom, we ſhall in ſeveral places find,
" that they did read the text otherwiſe,
" than according to the preſent punctua-
" tion; which is a certain argument, that
" the pointed copies, if there were any
" ſuch in their times, were not then held
" to be of any authority; for otherwiſe
" they would certainly have followed
" them."—Of the truth of this, the read-
er may ſatisfy himſelf by looking at the few examples hereto annexed, as faithfully extracted from the pointed Hebrew text, againſt which, the ſame words as read in the verſions of the ſeptuagint, and Jerom, are ſet, each in its own proper column.

The

	The pointed Hebrew text.	Read as pointed.	Read by the Septuagint.	Read by J. Jerom.	References to the Text.
1.	אַשְׁכְּנַז	Aſhkenaz	Ἀχαναζ	Aſcenez	Gen. x. 2.
2.	רַעְמָה	Rangmah	Ρεγχμα	Regma	Gen. x. 7.
3.	חַצַרְמָוֶת	Khatſarmaveth	Ασαρμωθ	Aſarmoth	Gen. x. 26.
4.	קְמוּאֵל	Kemuel	Καμουηλ	Camuel	Gen. xxii. 21.
5.	כֶּשֶׂד	Keſed	Χασξαδ	Caſed	Gen. xxii. 22.
6.	פִּלְדָּשׁ	Pildaſh	Φαλδας	Pheldas	Gen. xxii. 22.
7.	גֵּרְשֹׁם	Gerſhom	Γηρσαμ	Gerſam	Exod. xviii. 3.
8.	אָהֳלִיאָב	Aholiab	Ελιαβ	Ooliab	Exod. xxxvi. 1.
9.	שְׁלֻמִיאֵל	Shelumiel	Σαλαμιηλ	Salamiel	Num. vii. 41.
10.	רִתְמָה	Rithmah	Ραθαμα	Rethma	Num. xxxiii. 18.
11.	בַּעַל פְּעוֹר	Bangal Phengor	Βειλφεγωρ	Beel-phegor	Deut. iv. 3.
12.	מִצְפֵּה	Mitſpah	Μασηφα	Maſpha	Jud. xx. 3.

Theſe examples are only a ſpecimen of many, very many, more, which might be adduced, if there were uſe for it; but if theſe are not thought ſufficient, the authors of the above mentioned tranſlations may be conſulted for as many more as will certainly ſatisfy even the moſt ſcrupulous. However ſince the ſpecimen is in all reſpects conformable to the ſtock, a few examples, I thought, might ſerve my purpoſe as well as fifty-thouſand. Let it be obſerved then that in the 1ſt, 5th, 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th

12th examples foregoing, the authors of the ſeptuagint verſion, and S. Hieronymus, do in aſſigning vowels to the Hebrew conſonants, differ, both of them, from thoſe who pointed the Hebrew, and likewiſe from one another. We know very well, that the ſeptuagint verſion began to be made under Ptolemy Philadelphus king of Egypt, over which kingdom he began to reign (in virtue of his father's having reſigned in his favour) in the year before the birth of Chriſt 285, according to Dr. Prideaux's Chronology (*f*). S. Hieronymus flouriſhed in the beginning of the fifth century; and it muſt be owned, he was well verſed in the Hebrew language, and was taught after the manner then in faſhion amongſt the Jews, for a Jew was his teacher.—Hence I infer then, that (according to a moderate computation within bounds) from the year 200 before Chriſt, to the year 400 after Chriſt, the Hebrew language was otherwiſe read, than by the preſent pointing. And, from the

(*f*) The author of the Prolegomena to tom. II. of Dr. Grabe's ſeptuagint is of opinion (and gives his reaſons for it, prop. II. cap. 1.) that this verſion was made about the 7th year of Ptolemy's reign, that is (according to him) the 287th before Chriſt.

difference

difference obſervable amongſt the vowels aſſigned to the Hebrew conſonants in *one* and the *ſame word*, according to the reading of the ſeptuagint as differing from that of the Latin verſion above-mentioned, I would further infer, that the antients (during the ſpace of time as above) were not nice about the *vowels* that were to be uſed in *reading* the Hebrew, where the inſpired Hebrew writers had *wrote none*;—that in theſe inſtances (*i. e.* where the Hebrew writing does not admit of vowels inſerted betwixt the conſonants) the vowels are no eſſential part of the Hebrew writing, nay, that they are inconſiſtent with the true original propriety of it;—and conſequently that the inſerting of the vowels in the Hebrew *writing* by the preſent pointing or any other method whatever, as eſtabliſhing a method not known as far down as the year 400 of the chriſtian æra, is a late invention, and prejudicial to the purity of that language, as read and explained by the antients.

5. "Neither the (*g*) Miſhnah nor the "Gemara, either that of Jeruſalem, or that

(*g*) That the reader may know what ſort of matter is contained in the Miſhnah and Gemara, (which the Jews of the diſperſion pay more regard to, than to the divine law itſelf;

" that of Babylon do make any mention
" of theſe vowel-points; although in ſe-
" veral

itſelf, and the other ſacred Hebrew ſcriptures) I here give him (in the author's own words) what Dr. Prideaux tells us from the beſt authority with regard to their original compoſition, and date of their firſt publication, as follows:

" As to the antient and approved uſages of the Jewiſh
" church, which had been in practice before the captivity
" [of the Jews in Babylon]; they had, by Joſhua and
" Zerubbabel, with the chief elders their contempo-
" raries, and by others that after ſucceeded them, been a
" gathering together from their firſt return [from Baby-
" lon] to Jeruſalem, as they could be recovered from the
" memories of the antients of their nation, who had
" either ſeen them practiſed themſelves, before the cap-
" tivity, or had been informed concerning them by their
" parents, or others who had lived before them. All
" theſe, and whatſoever elſe was pretended to be of the
" the ſame nature, Ezra brought under a review; and
" having, after due examination, allowed ſuch of them
" as were to be allowed, and ſettled them by his appro-
" bation and authority, they gave birth to what the Jews
" now call their *oral law*. For they own a two-fold law;
" (Maimonides in præfatione ad Seder Zeraim) the *firſt*,
" the written law, which is recorded in the holy Scrip-
" tures; and the *ſecond*, the oral law, which they have
" only by the tradition of their elders. And both theſe,
" *they ſay*, were given them by Moſes from mount Sinai;
" of which, the *former* only was committed to writing,
" and the *other* delivered down to them from generation
" to generation, by the tradition of the elders. And,
" therefore, holding *them both* to be of the ſame autho-
" rity, as having *both of them* the ſame divine original,
" they think themſelves to be bound as much by the
" *latter*, as the *former*, or rather much more: for the
" written law is, *they ſay*, in many places obſcure, ſcanty,
" and defective; and could be no perfect rule to them,

" without

" veral places there are ſuch ſpecial oc-
" caſions and reaſons for them ſo to have
" done,

" without the oral law; which containing, according to
" them, a full, compleat, and perfect interpretation of
" all that is written in the other, ſupplies all the defects,
" and ſolves all the difficulties of it. And, therefore,
" they obſerve the written law no otherwiſe, than ac-
" cording as it is expounded and interpreted by their
" oral law. And hence it is a common ſaying among
" them, that the covenant was made with them, not
" upon the written law, but upon the oral law. And,
" therefore, they do in a manner lay aſide the former, to
" make room for the latter; and reſolve their whole re-
" ligion into their traditions, in the ſame manner as the
" Romaniſts do theirs, having no farther regard to the
" written word of God than as it agrees with their tradi-
" tionary explications of it; but always preferring them
" thereto, though in many particulars they are quite con-
" tradictory to it; which is a corruption that had grown
" to a great height among them even in our Saviour's
" time; for he chargeth them with it, and tells them
" (Mark vii. 13.) that they made the word of God of none
" effect through their traditions. But they have done it
" much more ſince, profeſſing a greater regard to the lat-
" ter, than the former: and hence it is, that we find it ſo
" often ſaid in their writings, that the words of the ſcribes
" are lovely above the words of the law; that the words of
" the law are weighty and light, but the words of the
" ſcribes are all weighty; that the words of the elders are
" weightier than the words of the prophets (where by the
" words of the ſcribes, and the words of the elders, they
" mean the traditions delivered to them by their ſcribes
" and elders); and in other places, that the written text
" is only as water, but the Miſhnah and Talmud (in which
" are contained their traditions) are as wine and hippo-
" cras. And again, that the written law is only as ſalt,
" but the Miſhnah and Talmud as pepper and ſweet ſpices.
" And in many other ſayings very common among them,

" do

" done, that it can ſcarce be thought
" poſſible, they could have omitted it,
" if

" do they expreſs the high veneration which they bear to-
" wards the *oral* or *traditional law*, and the little regard
" which they have to the written word of God, in com-
" pariſon of *it*; making nothing of the latter, but as ex-
" pounded by the former, as if the written word were no
" more than the dead letter, and the traditionary law alone
" the ſoul that gives the whole life and eſſence thereto."
(Connect. part i. pag. 431, 432.) I omit the *fabulous account* the Jews give of the original of their traditions, as recorded by the ſame celebrated author in the pages immediately following the above, and proceed to the truth of the matter, as declared pag. 435, &c. " After the death
" of *Simon the Juſt* [i. e. no earlier than after the year 291 before Chriſt] " there aroſe a ſort of men, whom they call
" the Tanaim or the Miſhnical Doctors, that made it
" their buſineſs to ſtudy and deſcant upon thoſe traditions
" which had been received and allowed by Ezra and the
" men of the great ſynagogue." (Covenant in the Cherubim, from pag. 157 to 178, compared with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, gives us reaſon to ſuſpect that the Jews forged even this plauſible pretext, to give ſome face of authority to their traditional dotages) " and to draw
" inferences and conſequences from them, all which they
" ingrafted into the body of thoſe ancient traditions, as if
" they had been as authentic as the other; which example
" being followed by thoſe who after ſucceeded them in
" this profeſſion, they continually added their own ima-
" ginations to what they had received from thoſe who
" went before them, whereby theſe traditions becoming
" as a ſnow-ball, the further they rolled down from one
" generation to another, the more they gathered, and the
" greater the bulk of them grew. And thus it went on
" to the middle of the ſecond century after Chriſt, when
" Antoninus Pius governed the Roman empire; by which
" time they found it neceſſary to put all theſe traditions
" into writing; for they were then grown into ſo great a

" if they had been in being, when thoſe
" books were written; or, if in being,
" had

" number, and enlarged to ſo huge a heap, as to exceed
" the poſſibility of being any longer preſerved by the
" memory of men. And beſides, on the ſecond deſtruct-
" ion which their country had undergone from the Ro-
" mans a little before, in the reign of Adrian the preced-
" ing emperor, moſt of their learned men having been cut
" off, and the chiefeſt of their ſchools broken up and diſ-
" ſolved, and vaſt numbers of their people diſſipated and
" driven out of their land, the uſual method of preſerving
" their traditions had then in a great meaſure failed; and
" therefore, there being danger, that, under theſe diſad-
" vantages, they might be all forgotten and loſt, for the
" preventing hereof it was reſolved, that they ſhould be
" all collected together, and put into a book; and Rabbi
" Judah, the ſon of Simeon, who, from the reputed ſanc-
" tity of his life, was called *Hakkadoſh*, i. e. *the holy*, and
" was then rector of the ſchool which they had at Tibe-
" rias in Galilee, and preſident of the Sanhedrim that
" there ſat, undertook the work, and compiled it in ſix
" books, each conſiſting of ſeveral tracts, which all toge-
" ther make up the number of ſixty-three; in which, un-
" der their proper heads, he methodically digeſted all that
" hitherto had been delivered to them of their law and
" their religion by the tradition of their anceſtors. And
" this is the book called the *Miſhnah*; which book was
" forthwith received by the Jews with great veneration
" throughout all their diſperſions, and hath ever ſince
" been held in high eſteem among them;——as ſoon as it
" was publiſhed, it became the ſubject of the ſtudies of all
" their learned men, and the chiefeſt of them both in Ju-
" dea and Babylonia employed themſelves to make *Com-*
" *ments* on it; and *theſe* with the *Miſhnah* make up both
" their *Talmuds*, i. e. the Jeruſalem Talmud, and the Ba-
" byloniſh Talmud. Theſe Comments they call the *Ge-*
" *mara*, i. e. the Complement, becauſe by them the
" Miſhnah is fully explained, and the whole traditionary
" doctrine

" had been looked on by the Jews of
" thoſe times to be of any authority
" among

" doctrine of their law and of their religion completed;
" for the Miſhnah is the text, and the Gemara the com-
" ment; and both together is what they call the Talmud.
" That made by the Jews of Judea is called the Jeruſalem
" Talmud, and was completed about the year of our Lord
" 300; and that made by the Jews of Babylonia is called
" the Babyloniſh Talmud, and was publiſhed about 200
" years after, in the beginning of the ſixth century." So far down it is, before any of even the Jews themſelves tell us any thing about their vowel-pointing, and that was upwards of nine hundred years after the pure Hebrew ceaſed to be the native language of Judea.

It deſerves to be attentively conſidered, that this body of the Jewiſh traditions, committed to writing ſo long after the commencement of the Chriſtian æra, is an enlargement of thoſe taught amongſt the Jewiſh *Scribes* and *Phariſees* before and in our Saviour's time, *whom* he juſtly reproves for teaching them as doctrines, ſeeing they tended to render the unchangeable word of God of none effect. Thoſe Miſhnical doctors amongſt the Phariſees began to teach their traditionary ſtuff, only in the later times of the Jewiſh polity; for before, and in, the days of *Simon* the *Juſt*, the high-prieſt of the Jews (who died in the year 292 before Chriſt, according to Dr. Prideaux's computation, and in whoſe time the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures is with great reaſon believed to have been completed) there were no traditions taught or even acknowledged amongſt the Jews, beſides the ancient and approved uſages of the Jewiſh church, which (as has been already obſerved) had been in practice before the captivity. The authors of the Septuagint verſion, whether Jews of Paleſtine or Jews of Egypt, behoved to have been educated in the days of this great and pious high-prieſt, and moſt likely upon either the plan eſtabliſhed under his authority, or a ſimilar one; for they began to tranſlate only about five years after his death; ſo that they cannot poſſibly be charged with the " leaven of

" among them. Neither do we find the
" the leaſt hint of them in *Philo Judæus*,
" or *Joſephus*, who are the oldeſt [hiſto-

" the Scribes and Phariſees," thoſe ridiculouſly-impious traditions or commandments of men, which were invented and taught in after-times for doctrines of divine authority. In after times, I ſay; for it muſt have been a conſiderable time after the days of *Simon the Juſt*, — after the death of his learned cotemporaries, — and after the *impreſſion* made in his nation by his piety, his example, his authority, and his ſtrict adherence to the purity of the divine laws, *was obliterated*, before thoſe impious traditions could gain any countenance at all, or be taught in the public ſchools; eſpecially as they were always oppoſed and rejected, not only by the Samaritans, but alſo by the ſect of the Sadducees amongſt the Jews; both of whom ſtuck cloſe to the letter of the law. — We then who value the purity of the divine Scriptures have great reaſon to bleſs and praiſe God, and to acknowledge and admire the wiſdom of his over-ruling Providence, in bringing about ſuch a ſpeedy and favourable concurrence of events, in conſequence of which, the holy Scriptures were taken out of the hands of thoſe who were not to be truſted with the ſole keeping of that ineſtimable treaſure, and the knowledge of them publiſhed to the world by honeſt and faithful men, previous to the days of thoſe Miſhnical dreamers, who endeavoured (as their ſucceſſors ſtill do) to render his word of none effect through their traditions. We ought alſo to entertain a reſpectful ſenſe of the fidelity of the Septuagint interpreters, as men of a good and pious education, and deſirous to make known the truth and purity of the ſacred text, ſo far as they could; and to put a juſt value upon the authority of their verſion as the moſt antient and indiſputable ſtandard, whereby the Hebrew Scriptures can be illuſtrated, and the profane preſumption of unbelieving Jews with regard to the pretended antiquity or authenticity of their *traditions*, and *various readings*, &c. &c. unanſwerably refuted, and expoſed to the ridicule of all conſidering men.

" rical

" rical] writers of the Jews, or in any of " the antient Chriſtian writers for ſeveral " hundred years after Chriſt. And al- " though among them, Origen and Je- " rome were well ſkilled in the Hebrew " language, yet in none of their writings " do they ſpeak the leaſt of them. Ori- " gen flouriſhed in the third, and Jerome " in the fifth century; and the latter " having lived a long while in Judea, " and there more eſpecially applied him- " ſelf to the ſtudy of the Hebrew learn- " ing, and much converſed with the " Jewiſh Rabbi's for his improvement " herein, it is not likely that he could " have miſſed making ſome mention of " them through all his voluminous works, " if they had been either in being among " the Jews, in his time, or in any credit " or authority with them, and that eſ- " pecially ſince, in his commentaries, " there were ſo many neceſſary occaſions " for his taking notice of them. And " it cannot be denied, but that this is a " very ſtrong argument againſt them." I ſhall add, it is ſo ſtrong an argument againſt them, that nothing can be ſtronger, in point of external evidence; and it is no leſs ſtrong againſt the method of *reading*

the Hebrew Text (according to the preſent cuſtom) by thoſe vowel-points, of whoſe *exiſtence* in the days of Hieronymus we have not the leaſt proof, nor ſhadow of proof. For Hieronymus himſelf read otherwiſe, as any one who has eyes (or an eye) in his head, may ſee; and it is very reaſonable to think, that he read as he was taught by his Jewiſh maſter, who ſeems to have been poſſeſſed of better ſenſe, and greater goodneſs of heart (*b*), than the generality of the *circumciſion* have ever been ſince the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity: and if ſo, then the Jews themſelves read otherwiſe at that time, than they do now by their Maſoretic points; and therefore, as the preſent *Maſoretic reading* is different from that which was more antient, and more conformable to the unmaſked ſimplicity of truth, as being nearer to the ages of inſpiration, I infer, that *it* is of a modern date, and appears to have been contrived ſince the days of Hieronymus.—But here it may perhaps be aſked, Why does

(*b*) S. Hieron. ad Oceanum. "Veni rurſum Hieroſolymam, et Bethelem, ubi labore pretii Bartenium "Judæum nocturnum habui Præceptorem: timebat enim "Judæos, et exhibebat ſe mihi alium Nicodemum."

Hieronymus differ, in his reading, from that of the Septuagint, which is not much below 700 years older ſtill, and ſo much nearer the times when the Hebrew was a *living* language? Which of *theſe two readings* is right? Or are *they both* ſo? Or *neither* of them ſo? I anſwer, it is my opinion (which, I believe, will appear upon mature conſideration to be well founded) *they are both right*. And my reaſon for thinking ſo may be read in the anſwer to this ſhort and parallel queſtion;—Whether is *ſamen* or *ſame* the *true reading* with reſpect to the Engliſh language? I ſay, *they* are *both true*, though indeed *each* in its own age. Language, we may obſerve, is in a perpetual flux; a word that is common or faſhionable in one age will ſcarcely be underſtood in another, but becomes (as we ſay) *dead*. When any *language* then becomes dead, the pronunciation of its both vowels and conſonants muſt neceſſarily undergo the ſame change in proceſs of time, that the correſponding ones undergo in the *living* languages whoſe fluctuation is confeſſedly perpetual. Of this, we have ſome glaring proofs in ſome antient Latin inſcriptions very differently ſpelled from what they would

would have been ſome hundreds of years later; and, I believe, there is no *living* language upon earth, which, five or ſix hundred years ago, was not very differently read and pronounced from what it now is. This obſervation, applied to the Hebrew, will in ſome meaſure account for the difference obſervable betwixt the two methods of reading above-mentioned, and illuſtrate the rectitude of them both. But, as I have already hinted, the inſpired Hebrew writers are very ſparing in the uſe of their vowels throughout all their writings; and, in many inſtances, give us only a combination of conſonants for a word, allowing us to ſupply the intermediate vowels in the beſt manner we ourſelves can. The difference of the vowels, betwixt the Septuagint and Latin verſion aforeſaid in many words of Hebrew extract, inſtead of being an inconſiſtency, ſerves to convince all *reaſonable men*, that the antients were not ſcrupulous about *vowels*, provided they could with the help of ſuch *vowels* ſound the conſonants diſtinctly; and that they were entirely ignorant of the *little*, *puerile*, *pedantic punctilio's* of the Maſoretic *reading*, ſo ſcrupulouſly maintained by the later

deſigning

deſigning Jews, againſt all reaſon and common ſenſe; conſequently, that it never entered into their heads to imagine, that even their own method of reading the Hebrew text (how much leſs the Maſoretic method not then invented!) was founded upon a divine authority; otherwiſe their method would have continued uniformly and invariably the ſame in every particular. If then, in reading the Hebrew, we, in imitation of the true antient method, can pitch upon one uniform conſiſtent ſcheme, whereby we ſhall be enabled to inſert (I mean, in pronunciation, but not in writing) betwixt the conſonants (which the inſpired Hebrew writers have combined without intermediate vowels) ſuch vowels as moſt naturally preſent themſelves to the human organs of ſpeech, then, I ſay, we read the Hebrew according to the true ancient method; and as long as we preſerve the writing and deflections of *that language* in the ſame purity in which the inſpired writers left *it*, we need not be ſolicitous about any other thing relative to it, being thus ſure of all *it's* eſſentials, as a ſimple, primeval language. The Hebrew, as written unpointed, has a more determinate meaning, and admits of a more natural reading

reading than a ſtranger to it can conceive; and as long as we obſerve this one fundamentally neceſſary rule in reading of it, viz. always to preſerve diſtinct the true, original, ſimple, pronunciation of the radix in all it's derivatives where there is the ſame radical combination of conſonants, it will appear to us in a conſiſtent and moſt amiable light, and may be learned with one tenth part of the toil which is neceſſary to the attainment of any other dead language whatever. In fine, ſince the inſpired Hebrew writers writ many words without vowels, and it appears that the ancients aſſumed a *reaſonable liberty* in aſſigning the vowels neceſſary to the diſtinct reading of thoſe words, long after the primeval purity of the Hebrew pronunciation was forgotten; why ſhould we allow ourſelves to be deprived of *this liberty* by the whimſical and ſelf-contradictory dreams of a parcel of blinded and deſigning infidels, who know no more (nay rather who will not allow themſelves to know ſo much) of the truth of the matter, than we ourſelves do. For my part, I think it highly imprudent, as well as injurious to the cauſe of truth, to give the leaſt countenance to any Jewiſh conceit,

ceit, precept, or tradition whatever, of which, the foundation does not evidently appear to be laid upon the authority of God's own *word* as *received* and *underſtood* by the ancients; or which has even ſo much as a diſtant appearance of being improveable by Jewiſh unbelievers to the detriment of the chriſtian religion;—but much more ſo, to adopt one of *their* practices, which is flatly repugnant to the more reaſonable practice of antiquity;—I mean, the Maſoretic method of pointing the ſacred Hebrew Scriptures — which plainly appears to be calculated out of no favourable deſign towards chriſtians, as being itſelf not only uſeleſs, but at the ſame time *directly* deſtructive of all propriety and uniformity both in the reading and acceptation of the Hebrew words. But of this, more in the ſequel: —— in the mean time, I proceed, in the next place to conſider the arguments which even ſome learned men (under the influence of an unaccountable infatuation) have urged in favour of this very method of pointing; ſo far as I think them worthy of notice.

SECTION

SECTION II.

Argument *in favours of the Maſoretic Pointing*, not concluſive.

1. "THE (*a*) ancient books, *Bahir*, "and *Zohar*, which are ſaid "to have been written, the one a little "before, and the other a little after, the "time of our Saviour, make expreſs and "frequent mention of the vowel-points; "which argument would be unanſwera-"ble againſt the later invention of them, "could we be ſure that theſe books are "as ancient as the Jews ſay they are. "But there are reaſons (*b*) ſufficient to "convince us, that both of them are of "a much later date. There are many "particulars in the books themſelves, "which manifeſtly prove them to be ſo; "and, for above a thouſand years after the "pretended times of their compoſure, "they were never heard of amongſt the "Jews themſelves, nor were they ever

(*a*) Dr. Prid. Connect. Part 1. Page 467.
(*b*) Arcanum punctationis, lib. ii. c. 3.

quoted

" quoted, nor made mention of by any " other writer during all that interval; " which gives abundant reaſon to con- " clude, that, till after theſe thouſand " years, they never had any being; but " that a falſe date of antiquity hath been " fraudulently put upon them, to re- " commend them to the world with the " greater credit. They are both cabba- " liſtical books; and the moſt they are " remarkable for, is the obſcurity of their " ſtyle, and the ſtrange, myſterious, and " unintelligible ſtuff contained in them.

2. " Whereas it is ſaid on the other " ſide [viz. againſt the Maſoretic punc- tuation] " that the Maſorites of Tiberias " invented the vowel-points about (*c*) five " hundred years after Chriſt, this appears " very unlikely (*d*). For the ſchools, " which the Jews had in Judea, were " then wholly diſſipated and ſuppreſſ- " ed, and no learned men there left, " of ſufficient ability for ſuch a perfor- " mance: —— beſides, were the thing

(*c*) This muſt be underſtood of the commencement or firſt hatching of this myſtery of antiquity, for it could not be executed all at once. See Cov. in the Cherubim, Page 273.

(*d*) Buxtorfius pater in Tiberiade, c. 5, 6. 7. Buxtorfius filius de antiquitate punctorum, Par. ii. c. 11.

" ever

" ever ſo likely, there is no authority for " it ſufficient to ſupport the aſſertion. " *Elias Levita* indeed ſaith it, and *Aben* " *Ezra*, who wrote about the middle of " the twelfth century, is quoted for it; " but higher up it cannot be traced. For " there is nothing ſaid in any antient " writer, either of their being invented " by the Maſorites at Tiberias, or any " where elſe after the Talmud; and it is " not likely, that, if this had been ſo late " an invention, a matter ſo remarkable " and of ſuch great moment could have " been wholly paſſed over in ſilence, " without the leaſt mention made of it " by any of the Jewiſh writers. But " to all this it is (*e*) replied" [againſt the punctuation] " that in hiſtorical matters, " it is not to be regarded, what the Jews " write, or what they omit concerning " them." And with regard to this invention, it was not their buſineſs to ſpeak any thing at all of it; for having reſolved to urge it upon chriſtians, as of divine authority, as an antient tradition handed down by their elders from Ezra, from Moſes, &c. &c. we may be very ſure

(*e*) Capellus in arcano punctationis, lib. ii. c. 15.

they

they never would be the firſt who would declare the real, but modern, date of it. This would have been contradicting themſelves in the flatteſt manner, and voluntarily expoſing their own diſingenuity, which is not to be thought *(f)*. But waving the *neceſſity* they were under to be ſilent on this head, we may obſerve, " That " of all nations in the world, that have " pretended to any ſort of learning, they " have taken the *leaſt care* to record paſt " tranſactions, and have done it very bungling, and in a manner that looks more " like fable than truth, wherever they " have pretended to it. And it is certain " there were Jews eminent in their way " of learning at *Tiberias* in S. Jerome's " time; for he tells us he made uſe of " them, and he died not till the year of " our Lord 420, which is but 80 years " before the time aſſigned." —— " It is " further added by thoſe who thus reply, " that they do not poſitively pin down the " invention of theſe vowel-points either " to the time or place which *Elias Levita* " aſſigneth for it; but only ſay, that it " muſt be after the time of the writings

(f) For further information, ſee Cov. in the Cherubim, pag. 266. & ſeq.

" of S. Jerome, and after the time of the " compoſure of the Talmud, becauſe in " neither of theſe any mention is made " of them: and this will neceſſarily car- " ry it down below the 500th year of our " Lord; but whether it were then im- " mediately done, or two or three hun- " dred years afterward, or at Tiberias, or " elſewhere, they will not take upon " them certainly to affirm. That the " vowel-points were not affixed by Ezra, " to the text; that they are not of a *di-* " *vine*, but only of a *human*, original, and " firſt introduced into uſe after the writ- " ing of the Talmud, is all that they po- " ſitively aſſert concerning this matter; " and that whatſoever is ſaid beyond this, " is only gueſs and conjecture, which " doth not at all affect the queſtion; and " therefore they will not contend about " it." For it does not ſignify, where, or by whom, or when, the punctuation was introduced; it was introduced *ſomewhere*, by *ſomebody*, and not ſooner than after the end of the fifth century of the Chriſtian æra: and this is enough for us who reject this uſage upon theſe accounts, were there none elſe.

3. " If

3. " If by the Maſorites who are ſaid " to have invented theſe vowel-points, are " meant the Authors of the preſent Ma- " ſorah, which is printed with the great " Bibles of *Venice* and *Baſil*, it is *(g)* cer- " tain they cannot be the inventors of " theſe points. For a great part of their " criticiſms is upon the vowel-points, " which muſt neceſſarily prove them to " have been long before fixed and ſettled; " for none chuſe to criticize upon their " own works."

Meſſrs. Buxtorf might have employed themſelves to better purpoſe, ſomehow otherwiſe than in coining this childiſh argument for our amuſement; and they might have allowed us to fall, before they offered to help us up again.—*If we do not mean* what they take it for granted is our *meaning*, this argument of theirs cannot affect us. *Capellus* (*h*) then will declare, that we *mean* ſome of the Maſorites, in general terms; ſometime after the making of the Talmud theſe Maſorites invented the vowel-points.

(g) Buxtorfius in Tiberiade, c. 9. Buxtorfius filius de Antiquitate punctorum, p. 2. c. 6.

(h) Arcanum punctationis, lib. ii. c. 10.

" There were Maſorites" [perhaps, tho' not of the *pointing* kind] " from the " time of Ezra and the Men of the " Great Synagogue (*i*), down to the time " of *Ben Aſher* and *Ben Naphtali*, who " flouriſhed about the year of our Lord " 1030"; and it is more than probable, " that ſome of theſe invented the points " ſometime after the making of the Tal- " mud, [ſooner it was not, as may appear from what is already ſaid] " and that after " that, ſome of thoſe who ſucceeded them, " perhaps two or three hundred years " after, made theſe criticiſms and remarks " upon them. For the Maſorah that is " now printed in the Bibles above-men- " tioned, is a collection and abridgment " of all the chief remarks and criticiſms " which theſe men did make upon the " Hebrew Text, from the firſt beginning

(*i*) *Simon the Juſt*, the high-prieſt, who died in the year 292 before Chriſt, is reckoned to be the *laſt* of the Men of the *Great Synagogue*. What the Jews call the Great Synagogue, were a number of elders amounting to 120, who ſucceeding, ſome after others in a continued ſeries, from the return of the Jews again into Judea, after the Babyloniſh captivity, to the time of *Simon the Juſt*, laboured in the reſtoring the Jewiſh church and ſtate in that country: in order whereto, the holy ſcriptures being the rule they were to go by, their chief care and ſtudy was to make a true collection of thoſe ſcriptures, and publiſh them accurately to the people. Dr. Prid. Connect. part i. pag. 765.

" to the time I have mentioned." But of this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more at large by and by (*k*).

4. It is further urged by the advocates for punctuation, that (*l*) " when the " Hebrew language ceaſed to be the mo- " ther-tongue of the Jews (as it is agreed " on all hands that it did, after the Baby- " loniſh captivity) it was ſcarce poſſible " to teach that language without theſe " vowel-points." This argument is very lame. I own indeed, it is ſcarce poſſible, nay more, it is abſolutely impoſſible, to teach the Hebrew, as read or pointed by the Maſorites, without theſe vowel-points; but this proves nothing at all, when the *Maſoretic punctuation* itſelf is the very thing diſputable. For if *it* is proved to be *ſpurious*, we need not deſire to learn the Hebrew according to that uſage, and then there will be an end of the neceſſity of being at all taught in that way. But that the Hebrew, as at firſt *written* and left *unpointed* by the inſpired Hebrew writers, cannot be taught or learned without theſe vowel-points, this I deny; and

(*k*) See below, Sect. iii. Argument 2.
(*l*) Buxtorfius de antiquitate punctorum, Par. ii. c. 10.

hope to ſhew, that it may be taught and learned too in a more natural and eaſy manner *without*, than *with*, the Maſoretic punctuation; as alſo that this punctuation, inſtead of being declarative of the nature or propriety of the Hebrew language, is to all intents and purpoſes (as far as human invention could, without diſcovering the ſiniſter deſign, the deep laid impoſture, deviſe) really and truly deſtructive of it, upon the very eaſy ſuppoſition that it (as well as all other languages) is formed upon the obvious principles of reaſon; which to deny, would (in my humble opinion) be abſurd and impious in a very high degree. But I reſerve what I am reſolved to ſay upon this point, till I come to the more particular conſideration of the pretended *authenticity* of the Maſoretic punctuation, according to the method I have propoſed. In the mean time proceed we to remove another ſtumbling-block out of our way.

5. It is likewiſe urged — "that if it "be allowed that the preſent vowel-points "are not of the ſame authority with the "letters, but are only of a late and human "invention, it will weaken the authority "of the Holy Scriptures" [*not the authority*,

rity, but the Rabbinical acceptation, of them, which can be no loſs to us] " and leave the " ſacred text to an arbitrary and uncer- " tain reading and interpretation; which " will give too much to the Papiſts, whoſe " main deſign is to deſtroy the authority " and certainty of the Holy Scriptures, " that thereby they may make room for " the traditions of their church, and the " deciſions of the infallible guide which " they pretend to have therein. And to " avoid this ill conſequence [ſays Dr. Prideaux] " is indeed the moſt prevailing " cauſe that hath drawn into this opinion" [the opinion, as I underſtand him, of the divine authority of the vowel-points] " moſt of thoſe learned Proteſtants that " contend for it." But I think, thoſe Proteſtants ſhould, before they had adopted this opinion, have conſidered, whether or not the *Jewiſh traditions* are leſs prejudicial to religion, than the *Papiſtical* ones; and whether we are likely to be more ſafe in the hands of unbelieving *Jews*, than in thoſe of the *Pope* and *them* who acknowledge *his* authority to be infallible: and if not, whether this does not afford occaſion to both Papiſts and *Jews* to laugh at thoſe Proteſtants who argue in

ſuch a manner; to the former, when they obſerve Proteſtants driven to *ſuch hard* ſhifts, rather than acknowledge the deciſive authority of their pretended infallible guide; and to the *latter*, when *they* obſerve us inveigling ourſelves in the belief of *their* traditionary conceits, rather than eſpouſe the equally ridiculous traditions of the Roman church. For if we acknowledge the vowel-points (againſt all the reaſonable evidence of the truth of the contrary) to be of divine authority, as the letters of the Hebrew text are, we *ipſo facto* acknowledge the divine authority of *Jewiſh* traditions; ſuch traditions to wit, of which we can diſcover no veſtiges amongſt the *Jews*, higher up than the times of their infidelity; nay no ſooner than many centuries after the commencement of their obſtinate reſiſtance and rejection of the counſel of God in Chriſt our Lord: "Who both killed the Lord "Jeſus and their own prophets, and have "perſecuted us; and they pleaſe not God, "and are contrary to all men; forbidding "us to ſpeak to the *Gentiles*, that *they* "might be ſaved, to fill up their ſins al-"way: for the wrath is come upon them "to the uttermoſt (*m*)." But if our Lord

(*m*) 1 Theſſ. ii. 15, 16.

himſelf

himſelf did, whilſt here on earth, pronounce of the traditions received amongſt the Jews *in his time*, that "they rendered "the word of God of none effect;" I deſire to know what credit is due to any tradition (relative to the word of God) which made it's appearance amongſt that ſtrangely deluded people, *after*, and not till *after*, and many ages *after* the time of our Lord's miniſtry? Againſt which, the Jewiſh nation raiſed that unprecedented oppoſition which every body knows, and perſevere in it to this very day. Ought we not rather in all reaſon and duty to conclude, that, if the Jews did, *before* our Saviour's day, hinder, through their traditions, the deſigned effect of the antient Scriptures of truth (from whatever motive I do not preſume to ſay) knowing them to be the word of God, it was very naturally to be expected, that, in conformity to their former behaviour towards the word of God, and from their avowed oppoſition to the goſpel, they would ſtill be hatching, after it's publication, a new brood of traditions to invalidate (ſo far as was in their power) the ſame word of God? they having no other way, with any the moſt diſtant appearance of ſucceſs, to evade

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the force of the arguments drawn from that infallible word againſt them by the Chriſtians, in teſtimony of the divine original of the goſpel-diſpenſation: any evidence for which, the unbelieving Jews would never acknowledge to be deducible from the antient Hebrew Scriptures, and accordingly fell at laſt upon the knack of punctuation, as the grand baſis of their favourite ſcheme of reading, conſtructing, and explaining the Hebrew Scriptures in their own ſenſe, as they could make them beſt ſuit their oppoſition of the goſpel. This point, it is very plain, they conſtantly kept in view, from the firſt moment that they obſerved the ſucceſs of the chriſtian religion; and to pave the way before them, they began with depretiating the old Septuagint verſion of the Hebrew Scriptures, which had pleaſed their anceſtors for the ſpace of 250 (*n*) years before there was a Saviour in the *fleſh* to oppoſe or crucify; and then (as has been already obſerved) they iſſued (*o*) other tranſlations that they liked better, as more ſuitable to their purpoſe. This attempt not being

(*n*) Tranſlated 280 or 286 years before the birth of Chriſt; it might be in pretty general uſe by the time here mentioned.

(*o*) See Dr. Prideaux's Connect. (above quoted) Part ii. page 65. *&c.*

ſufficient

ſufficient (as indeed it could not be) to effectuate the propoſed end; they next fell to work in diſguiſing the Hebrew text under the maſk of pretending *various readings*, and *pointings* both above, and below, and in the very bodies of, the plain letters; that thus diſtracted and diverted from a proper attention to the ſimplicity of the letters as originally written without points, it might be (as far as thoſe men, acting "contrary to *all men*," could make it) impoſſible for Chriſtians to make any thing more of it than they inclined ſhould be made. We may hence judge then of the *friendly* diſpoſition of the unbelieving Jews towards us, and how much better we are like to be under the guidance of their traditions, than of the Romiſh, upon the ſuppoſition that we were willing to read, conſtruct, and explain the Hebrew according to their punctuation. But on the other hand, ſuppoſe we reject this punctuation entirely (and from good reaſons we think ourſelves under indiſpenſable obligations ſo to do) I do not ſee why we need be afraid of making room thereby for the Romiſh traditions: for this is acknowledged to be the conſequence only "of leaving the "ſacred text to an arbitrary and uncer-

"tain

" certain reading and interpretation, by " which, the authority of the Holy Scrip- " tures will be weakened." Now I ſhall ſhew, in a proper place, that the Maſoretic reading is both arbitrary and uncertain (*p*), and a well calculated ſcheme to lead us directly into an uncertain interpretation of the Hebrew text, be the conſequence what it will: I ſhould, therefore, be doing a very wrong thing, if I countenanced or uſed this method of reading, whilſt the ſacred text unpointed preſents to us a better. To lay the foundation then of this *better reading* in reaſon and truth, we need only to conſult the natural ſentiments of mankind with regard to the formation of language in general.——All languages whatever (ſo far as I know, or can conceive) conſiſt of two ſorts of words; i. e. words primitive, and words derived. Now it is univerſally certain (and to affirm the contrary would be abſurd) that in whatever manner the primitive words are written and pronounced, their derivatives (as far as they conſiſt of the ſame combination of letters or ſounds) retain the ſame pronunciation, with only the difference of either one or more ſyllables added to

(*p*) See below, Sect. iii. Argument 5.

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the beginning or end of the primitive. And in their various deflections, whenever the primitive pronunciation is changed, then different organs of ſpeech muſt be employed; and in order to convey a diſtinct idea of this into the mind of the reader or writer, it is abſolutely neceſſary, as it is natural, that this change be denoted by different ſigns or letters. But ſo far as the letters are the ſame both in the primitive and derivative words, ſo far of conſequence the pronunciation alſo muſt be the ſame in both. It is not neceſſary to adduce examples of this, it being the known and natural uſage of all languages, and conſequently one of the moſt obvious *dictates* of *nature*. Hence then we may warrantably conclude, that this uſage takes place in the Hebrew language as at firſt ſpoken and committed to writing by pious men, who were actuated by *the ſpirit of the God and author of nature*.

To determine then the natural and approved reading of all derived words in the Hebrew language, we muſt firſt declare (ſo far as we can diſcover it) the reading or pronunciation of the primitives, or *radices*; which, we may believe, is, for the above-mentioned reaſon, founded upon

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ſhe moſt natural footing. And as the Hebrew language muſt be acknowledged the moſt (*q*) antient of any upon earth, and to have been ſpoken in the infantile ſtate (if I may ſo ſay) of human nature, it's *true* radical pronunciation muſt be the moſt ſimple; *ſuch* as is moſt eaſily expreſſed by the human organs of ſpeech, before they had, from experience of many different ages and dialects, been trained ſo, as to exert their ſeveral powers according to the ſtudied rules of art; and ſuch as is moſt obvious to one who has no other grammar, or pedagogue, but ſuch, as unbiaſſed nature carefully attended to readily ſuggeſts to him. Upon this footing is found to be grounded the true reading or pronunciation, as well as the formation or deflections of the Hebrew language; and it's interpretation is ſtrictly analogous hereto: for, whatever ſignification, or idea of any kind is intended to be expreſſed by the radix or primitive word, the very ſame idea is invariably *preſerved*, or, which is much the ſame thing, by conſequence *implied*, in the derivative.

(*q*) See my note upon this ſubject, chap. iii. of my Hebrew Grammar, under the Terminations plural of the ſcriptural Chaldee.

This

——This foundation of all language is obvious to every one of common ſenſe (as we ſay) and I know of no exception from theſe general rules, but only the occaſional change of a letter *ſometimes* for the ſake of a good ſound in pronunciation, which depends entirely upon (and without all doubt has at firſt proceeded from) the determination of a muſical ear, but is no eſſential property of one language more than another, it being common (in ſome degree) to all, yet not affecting in the leaſt the original radical meaning of the word; and, therefore, to be looked upon as a ſtudied refinement of after-ages, which was not known (or at leaſt in a very imperfect manner) till after long experience and repeated trials in the formation of articulate ſounds; ſo not taking place in the *primeval* Hebrew, as ſpoken before the flux of language and the uſage of differing dialects had inſenſibly influenced the primigenial pronunciation of it as founded upon the ſimple and obvious dictates of untrained nature.

This then is the foundation in nature and common ſenſe, upon which we ought to build our method of reading, deflecting, and interpreting the ſacred Hebrew language,

language, in common with all others (which I ſhall endeavour to illuſtrate more fully, by and by); and if to this we add a ſtrict and conſiderate attention to the context, or main deſign of the writer, ſo as to pitch upon that meaning of the words which makes the ſtrongeſt and moſt conſiſtent ſenſe; I dare venture to ſay, we ſhall ſeldom or never be at a loſs, and we ſhall always find the Hebrew conſiſtent with itſelf (which it is not as marred by the Maſoretic pointing) and the ſacred text thus fixed to a more certain, and more rational, as well as a more eaſily attainable, reading and interpretation, than it can be by any other method.

SEC.

SECTION III.

The learned Dr. Prideaux's opinion with regard to the authority *and* neceſſity *of the Maſoretic punctuation, conſidered.*

I AM now to conſider the opinion of the reverend and learned author whom I have often quoted already, with regard to this impoſture of the diſperſed and unbelieving Jews. Leſt I ſhould be thought blameable for preſuming to examine the ſentiments of this valuable perſon, I muſt vindicate myſelf by declaring previouſly, that I have no inclination to ſay any thing (upon this or any other ſubject) offenſive to the moſt delicate, or which might be deemed injurious to the memory of ſo great a man; whoſe memory will always be dear to all ingenuous lovers of truth, in proportion as they become ſenſible of his great abilities, and faithfulneſs, as an hiſtorian; in which character, no diſcerning perſon will (I am perſuaded) ſcruple to acknowledge him to have been a great man. Notwithſtanding, I humbly preſume, his opinion, or my own, as well as

that of any other perſon however conſpicuous or eminent, with regard to matters that may be denominated merely *opinionative*, is no further to be embraced, than the certainty of well atteſted *facts* and the genuine ſimplicity of *truth* denuded of all human inventions will permit. Let not any man's opinion then with regard to the Maſoretic punctuation of the ſacred Hebrew Scriptures be of more weight in our eſteem, than the credibility of facts that are inſeparably connected with the purity of religion; thoſe facts being atteſted, and of conſequence their credibility confirmed, by the experience of many ages;—and the purity of religion depending entirely upon receiving the ſacred Scriptures in the ſame manner in which they were left upon record by the inſpired writers themſelves.—My author, viz. Dr. Prideaux, gives it as his opinion,

1. "That (*a*) the vowel-points having "never been received by the Jews into their "ſynagogue, ſeems to be a certain evidence "that they were not antienly looked on by "them as an authentic part of the Holy Scrip-"ture of the Old Teſtament, but reckon-

(*a*) Connect. Part i. page 470.

"ed

" ed only as a human invention, added" [and I muſt add, *in a very bungling manner*] " for the eaſier reading of the text, " after the Hebrew ceaſed from being a " vulgar language among them. And " the Jews having been, till the time of " Chriſt, the true church of God, and " his choſen people, to whom thoſe Scrip- " tures and ſacred oracles of God were " given and committed; through their " hands the church of Chriſt hath re- " ceived them, and their evidence is that " which is to witneſs and determine unto " us, what part of them is authentic " Scripture, and what is not."

This deſerves to be conſidered maturely, and ſtated more *particularly* according to truth. Although the Jews were " the " true church of God, and his choſen " people, *till* the time of Chriſt;" they ceaſed to be ſo *after* the time of Chriſt; and, therefore, their *evidence poſterior* to the time of Chriſt cannot be looked upon as evidence proceeding from the true church of God: — ſo not competent " to witneſs " and determine unto us what part of " Scripture is authentic, and what is not." But further, What *Scriptures* were they, which Chriſtians received through the

hands of the Jews, *vouched* as *divine* or *authentic*, during the time that the Jews continued to be the true church of God; i. e. before the time of Chriſt? Were they the *Hebrew Scriptures* as we have them *pointed* at this preſent day? Nothing like it. *Theſe* did not make their appearance in the world, till after at leaſt five hundred years after Chriſt, when the evidence of Jews could not be binding upon us any further than it agrees with that of thoſe who were the true church of God before the time of Chriſt. The Septuagint verſion of the Hebrew Scriptures we certainly know to have been made during the time that the Jews were the true church of God, and many copies of it diſperſed up and down through the world long before the appearance of our Saviour in the fleſh, in conſequence of which, Chriſtians readily came to the knowledge of the antient oracles of God; and this verſion tranſlated ſeveral centuries before Chriſt, and uſed without exceptions by the Helleniſtical Jews during that period, we chearfully receive upon the evidence of thoſe Jews who uſed it before the time of Chriſt, becauſe we can have no reaſon to ſuſpect their ſincerity, which ſtands confirmed,

confirmed, as by other vouchers, ſo by this very important one, viz. the authority of our Saviour and his apoſtles, who frequently quote it:—but after the commencement of the Chriſtian æra every body knows for what reaſon the Jews did not deſerve ſo much credit. Yet we thankfully receive the Hebrew Scriptures alſo in their antient ſimplicity, not indeed upon the ſole evidence of unbelieving Jews, but principally upon the evidence of their being, in the main, agreeable to antient and approved tranſlations (the authority of which evidence is not impaired by our excepting the errors of tranſcribers, from which errors, eaſily diſcoverable, neither the Hebrew Scriptures nor their antient tranſlations are at this diſtance of time entirely free; nor by the *different accounts* of the length of the patriarchal lives, *obſervable* in the Hebrew and its tranſlations, the Hebrew computation having been (*b*) altered by the unbelieving Jews ſince the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity); and though we thus receive them, we think we have a title to reject the Rabbinical or Maſore-

(*b*) Joſephus computes in the ſame manner as do the Septuagint, and as we cannot imagine he would flatly contradict the Hebrew, we conclude that in his time the Hebrew and Septuagint computations were the ſame.

tic punctuation of them, as introducing a *reading* and *interpretation* in many, very many and important caſes *different* from the uſage and meaning of thoſe, who, before the time of Chriſt, were the church of God, and not heard of before the times of Jewiſh infidelity; and more eſpecially, as we find the Hebrew, when denuded of theſe points, perfectly conſiſtent with the natural uſage of language in general, exhibiting in a moſt advantageous light a beautiful picture of primeval ſimplicity, and impreſſed with manifeſt ſignatures of the inſpiration which actuated thoſe who firſt committed it to writing; whereas this Maſoretic punctuation does, almoſt in every inſtance, make it the very reverſe, as I ſhall endeavour to prove by and by.—The Hebrew Scriptures, *pointed*, or *unpointed*, were locked up in the hands of the *Jews*, and the knowledge of the Hebrew language peculiar to only a *few* (more learned than the generality) even of *them*, till after the publication of the goſpel; and even when Chriſtians came to the knowledge of thoſe Scriptures, it was contrary to the inclinations of the Jewiſh people in general; ſo that I do not ſee what reaſon we can have to thank

them

them for their evidence; and ſure I am, we have little enough reaſon to depend upon it, ſince the *facts*, to which they are pretended to bear evidence, is proved, by the undeniable teſtimony of antiquity, never to have happened, till long after the church or kingdom of God was transferred from the Jews to the Gentiles. And this is abundant reaſon why the evidence of unbelieving Jews cannot be acknowledged competent in this caſe, and we treat them no otherwiſe than they ought to be treated, when we reject it. But in few words, the truth is juſt this; The ſacred *Hebrew* text is vouched by the voice of antiquity, as being conformable to the antient copies of the *Greek* Scriptures (not to mention *others*) which were derived from the primeval Hebrew; whereas the Maſoretic punctuation and marginal notes are plainly an invention of modern times, ſo not worth a farthing. Although we are in reaſon and duty bound to accept of the teſtimony of the antient Jews, who, before the time of Chriſt, were the true church of God, witneſſing and determining unto us what part of Hebrew Scripture is authentic; we are not bound to accept of any other (eſpe-

cially if that other contradicts the former, and is of later date) further than it ſerves to eſtabliſh the credit of the teſtimony previouſly given by the church of God, by its conformity thereto. But further,

2. " It is moſt likely (ſays the dean) " that theſe vowel-points were the inven- " tion of the Maſorites, a little after the " time of Ezra." I anſwer, this is not likely at all, ſince no Jewiſh writer whatever makes any mention of them till, perhaps, later than ſix or ſeven hundred years after Chriſt; when the pitchy darkneſs of barbarous ignorance and bigotry which then began to overſpread the Chriſtian world, and to obſcure the light of evangelical truth, gave the Jewiſh Rabbies the faireſt opportunity they could have deſired to introduce into their ſchools what nonſenſe they could hatch, to favour and confirm the prevailing ignorance, without their being obſerved by thoſe whom they were ſtudious to deceive.—But ſuppoſing at preſent, that they were invented about the time ſpecified by the Dean, it appears that the invention (though recommended by the *learned* and *judicious* among our modern Jews, *riſum teneatis!*) was then and for many ages after, diſregarded and totally

totally neglected by men of judgment and knowledge among the *then* Jews, the choſen people and true church of God. The authors of the Septuagint verſion had certainly a good underſtanding of the Hebrew, and knew *as well* at leaſt how it ought to be read, as any Jews poſterior to them could do; but *much better* unqueſtionably than any Jew whatever, ſo late as ſince the eſtabliſhment of the goſpel. We find then that thoſe authors read the Hebrew not according to our Maſoretic method; and they flouriſhed, not a *little*, but a *long while* after the time of Ezra, viz. 171 years after Ezra received his commiſſion from king Artaxerxes; and if it be argued that the Septuagint verſion was made any later than the year 287 before Chriſt, ſo much the longer it was after the time of Ezra, and after this pretended invention of the then Maſorites. Now I argue, if the learned *authors* of this verſion paid no regard to this invention, why need *we* regard it? And if it did not merit eſteem *then*, how can it *now*? —But it ſeems (as the Dean thought) there was a neceſſity for ſuch an invention at that time in order to the reading and teaching of the Hebrew text, which ſeems to prove, that the vowel-points came into uſe a little after the time

time of Ezra. I anſwer, there was no more neceſſity for thoſe points *then*, than there is now, or than was at the time when the Septuagint verſion of the Holy Scriptures was made from the primeval Hebrew into the Greek language by Jews who behoved to underſtand the then faſhionable reading or pronunciation of both Hebrew and Greek. " And that " they" [the vowel-points, continues the Dean] " were invented by the Maſorites, " ſeems moſt likely, becauſe of the buſi- " neſs and profeſſion which theſe men " employed themſelves in. For theſe " Maſorites were a ſet of men, whoſe " profeſſion it was, to write out copies of " the Hebrew Scriptures, and to criticiſe " upon them, and alſo to preſerve and " teach the true readings of them; and " what they obſerved and taught in order " hereto is by the Jews called the *Maſo-* " *rah.* — (*c*) Theſe vowel-points were " for many ages only of private uſe among " the Maſorites, whereby they preſerved " to themſelves the true readings of the " Holy Scriptures, and taught them to " their ſcholars. But they were not re-

(*c*) Connect. Part i. page 4-9.

" ceived

" ceived into they divinity ſchools" [i. e. the ſchools of the Rabbies amongſt the Scribes and Phariſees, thoſe whimſical profeſſors of traditionary learning, and their ſucceſſors] " till after the making of " the Talmud : — And—as long as theſe " vowel-points went no higher than the " ſchools of theſe Maſorites, they were " of no regard among their learned men, " nor taken any notice of by them." This then, it ſeems, may be acknowledged as a certain fact, for which, a good reaſon is alſo hinted ; — The learned among the Jews before the time of Chriſt did not regard the Maſoretic punctuation. Why ? becauſe being the exerciſe of Maſorites and ſchool-boys, it was not worthy of being regarded, nor of being received into the higher ſchools. Hence then I obſerve, that their diſregarding of it, and their reading the ſacred Hebrew text after another method, for the ſpace of about nine hundred years (computing from " a " little after the time of Ezra" to the commencement of the Talmudical æra, i. e. from the year 400 before, to the year 500 after Chriſt) give us abundant reaſon to believe, that this Maſoretic ſtuff of punctuation never would have been regarded

garded by any Jew of ſolid judgment and Learning, as long as there was no *other* (and by the Jews, more *deſired) end* to ſerve thereby, beſides the *reading* of the Hebrew Scriptures.—In the mean time I would have it obſerved, that I affirm all this as deducible from the Dean's ſuppoſition that this invention was as old as he thinks it was; but my real opinion of the matter is, that, before the time of Chriſt, this invention had not a being. This I take to be the only natural conſequence deducible from obſerving that in thoſe antient ages the Hebrew text was read by the learned among the Jews after a different method from that preſcribed by the Maſorites: for, had thoſe learned men been taught according to the Maſoretic method, and looked upon it as authentic (in the now Rabbinical ſenſe of the word) they never would have diſregarded it; or had it exiſted then, as afterwards, all the Jewiſh youth would have been taught according to it: but as we find that they read after another method when they were arrived at the full maturity of reaſon and judgment, we juſtly conclude, that they never knew of any other method beſides that which they uſed,—that conſequently

the Maſoretic method was not then taught, in other words, had no being. The Dean (d) ſays a great deal in order to ſhew the neceſſity of vowel-points "from the time "that the Hebrew language ceaſed to be "vulgarly ſpoken, as it certainly did in "the time of Ezra.—With reſpect to this alleged neceſſity, I confeſs I do not ſee any appearance of it; eſpecially when I conſider, that there certainly was a *dialect* at leaſt of the Hebrew ſpoken by *ſome*, though, perhaps, not by *all*, of the Jews, not only in the days of Ezra, but alſo for ſome ages after his death. And, although, we acknowledge, that ſome (and it could not be a great deal) of the primeval purity of the Hebrew pronunciation might be loſt in about a hundred and fifty years after the death of Ezra, by whom it was preſerved and taught (i. e. about the time when the Hebrew Scriptures began to be tranſlated by the Septuagint interpreters; yet this does not oblige us to acknowledge too that the reading, &c. of the Hebrew Scriptures without points was a matter of greater, or even ſo great difficulty in their days, as

(d) Connect. Part. i. Page 472.

in

in ours, or any time after the final diſperſion of the Jews.

(*e*) "But the difficulty is as to thoſe "who do not underſtand the language: "for how they could be ever taught to "read it without vowels, after it ceaſed "to be vulgarly ſpoken, is ſcarce poſſible "to conceive."—I am entirely of the Dean's opinion in this point, that is, ſo far as his words can reaſonably be underſtood; neither the Hebrew nor any other language can ever be read or pronounced without *vowels:* but what then? I ſuppoſe this is no objection againſt reading the Hebrew without the *Maſoretic vowels*, &c. as denoted by various (and arbitrarily variable) dots or points annexed to the plain letters of the text. This is the point in queſtion; and if the Dean meant, that the Hebrew, as being now a dead language, cannot be taught or read without *theſe*, I beg leave to differ from him: for without *theſe*, I am convinced, we can read the Hebrew as well as it was read by the authors of the Septuagint verſion two hundred and eighty years and upwards before the birth of Chriſt, which, I think,

(*e*) Connect. Part i. Page 473.

is

is enough for us; nay, I will venture to ſay, we can read it as eaſily and naturally, and as conſiſtently with the radical properties of the language, as ever it was read ſince the Babyloniſh captivity, allowing we had never ſeen nor heard of the idle invention of Maſorites with regard *to vowel-points, accents, quieſcent letters,* and God knows what more. But before I come to ſhew particularly the groundwork of the reaſonable method, according to which, this will appear to be a matter of no great *difficulty,* I muſt mention one or two inſtances more, wherein I differ from the Dean, and why I do differ from him.

3. " The unpointed words in the He-
" brew are" (ſays he *(f)* " the ſame with
" abbreviations in Latin; and if it be
" impracticable for any novice to learn
" the Latin language by books, wherein
" all the words are ſo abbreviated, that
" only two or three letters" [i. e. conſonants] " of them ſtand for the whole, we
" may juſtly infer, that it is as impracticable for any who is a ſtranger to the
" Hebrew, ever to learn it by books,

(f) Connect. Part i. Page 475.

" wherein

" wherein all the words are unpointed;
" yea, and much more ſo; for the ab-
" breviations in Latin are certain" [and ſo are the abbreviations in the Hebrew]
" ſuch an abbreviation being always put
" for ſuch a word, and for none other;
" but it is otherwiſe in the abbreviations of
" the unpointed Hebrew; for in them,
" all the vowels being left out, the re-
" maining letters, which are to ſtand for
" the whole, may, as pronounced with
" different vowels, be different words" [I affirm, this can happen only according to the arbitrary and whimſical acceptation of the Maſorites and other unbelieving Jews, who are no doubt highly pleaſed with the thoughts of thus wheedling and ſeducing us from a ſteady attention to the ſimplicity of truth; but whoſe authority in this and ſuch like points, it is no more reaſonable, in my humble opinion, to acknowledge, than it is, to believe that *the moon is made of new cheeſe*]; " as for
" example, there are two conjugations in
" Hebrew" [that is, according to the Maſoretic punctuation, which, as a ſnake lurking among the graſs, we are obliged to keep a conſtant eye upon] " one called *Pihel*,
" and the other *Puhal*; the former is an
" *active*,

" active, and the other a *paſſive*, and " *both* are written throughout all their " moods and tenſes (except the infini- " tive) with the ſame letters; and they, " as differently pointed, may be either " the one or the other: and although, in " reading, the context may determine " the *active* from the *paſſive*; yet if we " do not by pointed books firſt learn " what vowels properly belong to the " one, and what to the other, how can " we know with *which* to read or pro- " nounce either of them in the unpoint- " ed books?"—I anſwer we can *never* indeed know this without confining our reading of the *unpointed* books to that of the *pointed* ones. But what of all that? Does this prove the *Divine Authority* of that punctuation, which conſtitutes theſe very conjugations? I cannot ſee that it does. On the contrary, every one muſt ſee that this is what we call *begging the queſtion*, or taking for granted the very thing diſputed without giving a ſufficient reaſon why it ſhould be allowed. Diſprove, therefore, the Maſoretic punctuation, by which theſe pretended conjugations are diſtinguiſhed, or aſcertained, and then the mighty ſons of *pihel* and *pyhal*

will be effectually overthrown, and for ever diſabled from giving us any further trouble. And it is as clear as ſun-ſhine, that if the Maſoretic punctuation was diſregarded before and long after the birth of Chriſt (which, I flatter myſelf I have already proved ſatisfactorily to have been a certain fact) theſe conjugations formed thereby were *then* alſo diſregarded; in other words, were not invented. And, if they were diſregarded before and long after the birth of Chriſt, why ſhould they be regarded afterwards? Ought we not rather to infer, that ſince the Maſoretic punctuation of the ſacred Hebrew was never heard of till of late (in compariſon), ſo neither were theſe conjugations *pihel* and *puhal* thought of (as indeed they are uſeleſs) till the *ſcheme* of punctuation was previouſly contrived, upon *which*, theſe conjugations have an abſolute dependence, and without *which*, they cannot poſſibly ſubſiſt? Eſpecially if we conſider what the learned Dr. Prideaux himſelf acknowledges, namely, that their moods and tenſes (except the infinitive, which I ſhall provide reception for, below) may (if we diſregard the points, and attend to the letters only) be eaſily reſolvable into each other;

other; and I am very ſincerely of opinion (and ſhall immediately demonſtrate the truth of it) that they are more eaſily reſolvable, according to the natural acceptation of their conſtituent letters, into thoſe of *others*, than into each other; whilſt the context as eaſily determines the meaning, and ſo prevents the danger of a miſtake.

I affirm then, theſe pretended conjugations, *pihel* and *puhal*, are nothing elſe but the *ſimple affirmation* (commonly called *kal*) diſguiſed by pointing, and ſo ſtrained into a *borrowed* ſignification; excepting the participle which is neither more nor leſs than a different formation from that (which is ordinarily the regular participle) of the *tranſitive active* commonly called *hiphil*, but villainouſly detached off to cover and ſtrengthen a very weak ſide in theſe patched up and tottering *forms*. The truth of this important poſition I thus demonſtrate.—I obſerve that theſe pretended conjugations (ſo patched up with no other conceivable deſign but to give an appearance of authority to punctuation) have not any meaning or ſignification proper to themſelves, which is not expreſſed by, either the

ſame verb unpointed in the *ſimple form*, or *kal*;—or, as the letters may denote, by the participle tranſitive (i. e. in what is called *hiphil, active*, or in *hophal, paſſive*) inſtead of the pretended participle in *pihel* and *puhal*. And with regard to *puhal*, alias *pyhal*, very few examples of it occur even according to the Maſoretic pointing and acceptation of the Hebrew text; and where it does occur, nothing hinders us from ſuppoſing (after denuding it of it's points) that it is the very radical verb itſelf terminating *actively*, but ſignifying *paſſively*, as the context can determine. This is no vague imagination detrimental to the native propriety of the Hebrew; for it occurred to me upon my obſerving occaſionally what every one muſt know, who is but little converſant in the Hebrew, to be a certain truth—that there are verbs in the Hebrew language that aſſume a *paſſive form* of pronunciation, at the very ſame time that they have an *active* ſignification, and can have no other ſuitable to the ſcope of the context. Now if this propriety can determine in one caſe, why heſitate we to acknowledge the determining power of a ſimilar propriety in a ſimilar caſe, as I have ſtated it above?

without

without ſuppoſing a *new* conjugation which cannot be formed any other way, but by marring the natural original vis of the letters unpointed as at firſt written, and conſequently raiſing a new difficulty contrary to nature, and without any appearance of reaſon or regard to the propriety of the language. Thus for inſtance, the verbs, נלחם *pugnavit*, as in Jehoſ. x. 42. and נשבע *juravit*, as in Gen. xxii. 16. have, both of them a *paſſive* formation, but are known from the context to ſignify *actively*, and *actively* only. And thus the verb ילד may as naturally ſignify either *parturio*, or *naſcor*, according to the ſcope of the context, as Γείνομαι in the Greek ſignifies *(g) gigno, naſcor*; either of which might be aſcertained by the context, without the vowel-points and Dageſch to give it occaſionally the appearance of artificial *pihel* or *pyhal* according to the uſage of the Maſorites when they would denote either the one or the other of theſe *modern* conjugations. Here I cannot omit a pretty enough ſpecimen of the judgement of the Maſoretic pointers, exhibited in their manner of

(b) See Scapulæ Lexicon in voce.

torturing this laſt mentioned Hebrew verb ילד, to make it aſſume the appearance (whether it will or not) of their *paſſive*, *pyhal*. They point it thus יְלֻדוּ Gen. vi. 6. יְלֻד Gen. xli. 50 (I omit the accents as a more *(h) uſeleſs* impoſition than even the vowel points, and a more *ridiculous* one too); in order to make a *pyhal* of it, or *paſſive* (although when ſo dreſſed, it can denote no more but a certain known circumſtance of being, which is neither *active*, nor *paſſive*, properly) and by ſo doing, have wretchedly betrayed their

(h) The accents are more *uſeleſs* than the vowel-points, as they can be deſigned for no other end (though the *true end* is juſt an unintelligible maſs of perplexity to confound our underſtanding) but either to denote the Jewiſh method of expreſſing ſuch or ſuch ſyllables with a certain muſical tone of voice, which is not eſſential to either the true reading or underſtanding of the Hebrew; or to ſhew when the voice is to be elevated or depreſſed, and the time, long or ſhort, of continuing the voice in pronouncing the accented ſyllable, which is impoſſible to be aſcertained in a language ſo long *dead* before the invention of points of any kind, and tho' it could, would be of as little ſignificancy to us as the former; or to ſhew the reſts, i. e. commas, ſemicolons, &c. which the ſenſe of the paſſage fixes, in any caſe *as well*, and often *better*, without than with theſe helps.—More *ridiculous*, as no language can have any real need of ſuch an extravagant number of little variable figures for any or all of the above purpoſes, were theſe purpoſes regarded in reading more than they at preſent are, or (excepting the reſts or pauſes) they ever need to be regarded, towards underſtanding the language.

ignorance

ignorance of the genuine propriety both of language in general and of the Hebrew in particular; in as much as they did not advert, that a *neuter* ſignification (and particularly *that* of this verb adduced) may be denoted by the *active* as well as the *paſſive* form. In proof of this I appeal to Exodus i. 22. where *natus, a, um,* is expreſſed by a *participle active,* viz. ילוד, I mean, in the *ſimple active form* of the verb; to Gen. xlviii. 5. where the plural *nati (participle)* is expreſſed by נולדים the *participle* in the *paſſive* form; and, once more, to 1 Paral. xx. 8. where *nati ſunt* is expreſſed by the regular *præt. plur.* נולדו, in the *paſſive form.* But this native propriety of the language won't ſatisfy the Maſorites; though ילוד *(particip. activ.)* may ſignify *natus,* they cannot (it ſeems) allow that the ſimple preter, ילד can ſignify *natus fuit:* No; they are above *ſimplicities*; they have other ends to ſerve, ends more deſirable to them, than ſhewing native proprieties; it is more for their purpoſe and (alas! miſtaken) intereſt, to diſplay their art in coining a *new form* for this imaginary *paſſive* ſignification, by the help of their vowel-points and dageſch; tho' in the mean time, without any neceſſity, the word being as good and expreſſive before

before as after they have manufactured it in this manner. What is here ſaid of this verb is (as far as the *unnatural* formation of a *pihel* or *pyhal* is concerned) ſtrictly applicable to every other verb in the ſame circumſtances.—But inſtead of there being any the leaſt appearance of neceſſity or uſefulneſs in the thing, I would further obſerve (as a ſtill higher degree of demonſtration, which we may challenge all the Maſorites or pointers who ever had *noſes*, to obviate or gain-ſay) that it is moſt unaccountably abſurd, nay impious, to ſuppoſe or ſuperinduce a new conjugation or different form of the verb, where no alteration of the letters is made in the original writing: for if it is allowable thus to ſtrain the ſimple vis of the letters, and to foiſt in among them a villainous brood of artificial vowels, to make the word have a different appearance from that of a ſimple radix, contrary to the mind of the inſpired writers, and to impoſe a *new ſignification* upon the word thus pointed, *independent* of, or not *implied* in, *that* of the radix conſiſting of the ſame identical letters, then farewell all certainty both in the reading and explanation of the Hebrew language. The conſequence is dreadful;

for

for this is laying a foundation for every unbelieving Jew or Heathen to raiſe endleſs cavils againſt the otherwiſe certain meaning of every word in the inſpired Hebrew writings, that could be reaſonably and conſiſtently conſtructed ſo, as to expreſs an important truth, or expoſe in it's proper colours the madneſs of their infidelity. But we will not ſit down ſo tamely under this impoſture. Had the inſpired Hebrew writers ever intended that the radical pronunciation of the verb, as in it's ſimple form called *kal*, ſhould be changed according to the preſcription of the Rabbinical grammarians, or Maſoretic pointers, in order to form this conjugation called *pihel*, we had had an indication of it amongſt the letters of the text itſelf, in the ſame manner as in other formations where the reading is ſimilar. For example, had it been a native propriety of the Hebrew language in the days of inſpiration, that the verb כפר (CHaPHaR) Gen. vi. 14. ſhould be read CHiPPeR, כִּפֶּר, as the Maſorites point it in Exodus xxx. 10. to put it into *pihel*) they would undoubtedly have inſerted the letter י as a formative betwixt the *two firſt radicals*, as there is ſuch a vowel in the Hebrew alphabet

alphabet, and which we find always inſerted betwixt the *two laſt radicals* of the verb in the formation of the *genuine tranſitive conjugation* known by the name of *hiphil*, when ה, or it's parallel *I*, is to be pronounced (the other alterations, as above, of the primeval radical pronunciation of the verb I look upon as a viſible corruption of the language, ariſing from the arbitrary whim of idle pointers) but as this is never once the caſe, that י is to be obſerved betwixt the *two firſt radicals* of the verb, the conſequence is plain, the formation of *pihel* was never allowed by the inſpired writers; is founded upon the Maſoretic punctuation, and it only; and therefore muſt ſhare the ſame fate with it, i. e. be for ever diſregarded by every ſincere lover of truth. I inſiſt upon it, that the inſertion of י betwixt the *two firſt radicals* was and is as neceſſary towards a *pihel* reading (according to the obvious propriety of the Hebrew in the ſimilar caſe) as the inſertion of it betwixt the *two laſt* is neceſſary towards a *hiphil* reading, were *pihel* a *real* conjugation; therefore the abſence of י from the *pihel* formation annihilates the neceſſity of the *pihel* reading (ſo *pyhal* alſo muſt pack up

his

his awls); for we muſt ſtick by the *radical reading* wherever we obſerve the *radical writing*. We dare not (for the regard that is due to truth) allow the inſerting of new coined vowel-points, dageſches, &c. amongſt the letters contrary to the uſage of the inſpired writers, thereby to change the eſtabliſhed powers of the letters, and to make room for that forced reading (and Rabbinical interpretation thereby countenanced) of the ſacred Hebrew text, which has no better foundation than the αὐτὸς ἔφη of a few whimſical and ignorant pedants ſet up in oppoſition to the ingenuity of ſuch of their foreſathers who were more to be truſted than they, who had ſurer means of information, and were more antient by ſeven hundred years or upwards. Certainly more regard is due to the ſacred Hebrew writings, in the eſtimation as of Chriſtians, ſo alſo of every perſon of common ſenſe who can reverence any undoubted veſtige of antiquity from no higher motive than curioſity or pleaſure, than thus to diſtort, and with a high hand to pervert the original ſimplicity of them in direct defiance of their known (and abovementioned) propriety, upon no better than a human authority, the worſt of all

human

human authorities too, that of obſtinate, willfully, blind-folded, and malevolent unbelievers, who " *are againſt all men,* " *upon whom the wrath of God is fallen* " *to the uttermoſt,*" and who are (in compariſon) only of yeſterday's date, which I look upon to be really no authority at all; and ſhall never (with God's gracious help) think otherwiſe without a ſatisfactory reaſon (ſuch as will bear the teſt of an impartial trial) inducing me: But no ſuch reaſon I am ſure can be given againſt the known propriety of the original Hebrew writing above-mentioned bearing teſtimony to itſelf upon the authority of the inſpired Hebrew writers, and illuſtrated by the uniform uſage of the higheſt antiquity. Therefore let us hold faſt by this authority which we are ſure can never deceive us; " let God be true, and every man a " liar," who has the daring impiety to oppoſe himſelf to the dictates of his unerring ſpirit; and in fine, let the chimerical conjugations *pihel* and *pyhal*, their diſtinguiſhing *vowels*, and *vowel-points*, *dageſch*, and all the other trumpery of Maſoretic invention be devoted to what they deſerve, *everlaſting neglect*.

4. " It

4. " It is acknowledged on all hands" (ſays (*i*) my learned author) " that the " reading of the Hebrew language could " never have been learned, after it ceaſed " to be vulgarly ſpoken, without the " help of vowels; but they who will " not allow the points to have been ſo " antient, tell us, that the letters, י, ו, ה, א, " which they call *matres lectionis*, then " ſerved for vowels." It is very true, if we except ה, which is a conſonant (whoſe vis is ſo ſlender, that the antient Greeks had no correſponding letter in their alphabet whereby to expreſs it; but they always mention the vowel that goes along with it, which has probably led ſome into the miſtake of thinking that ה itſelf was the vowel) י, ו, א, are vowels, and *patres* as well as *matres lectionis* of the Hebrew language.

" But (continues he) there are a great " number of words in the Hebrew way " of writing — in which none of theſe " letters are to be found, and ſcarce any " in which ſome of the ſyllables are not " without them; and how then, can " they ſupply the place of *vowels*, and

(*i*) Connect. Part i. Page 474.

" every

" every where help the reading inſtead " of them, ſince every where they are " not to be found?" I anſwer, they ſupply the place of vowels where they *are* found; and where they *are* not to be found, ſuch vowels are to be ſounded, as moſt *naturally* and *readily* offer themſelves to the human organs of ſpeech (I ſhall explain myſelf by and by): for which reaſon it is moſt probable (I may ſay, certain) the inſpired Hebrew writers did not always inſert theſe amongſt the conſonants (but only ſometimes as will alſo be accounted for in it's own proper place) they being obvious to every one who can ſpeak, nay, to every one who can open his mouth, and extend his voice without moving his tongue out of it's natural poſition. And this method of writing (without inſerting the vowels in every inſtance of ſyllabication) inſtead of being a blemiſh, inſtead of leaving the reader at a loſs or uncertainty, is indeed one of the great perfections of the Hebrew language; for in conſequence thereof, the ſacred Hebrew writings are capable of a more certain, and a more eaſily attainable reading and interpretation, than thoſe in any other dead language, in which all the vowels neceſ-

ſary

ſary to be ſounded are promiſcuouſly written among the conſonants. I may alſo obſerve that this Hebraic method of writing is highly expreſſive of that uniformity and invariable conſiſtency, according to which we are bound to read and interpret thoſe moſt antient of all records; and ought to be looked upon, in all reaſon, as an effectual preſervative againſt all *impious* attempts to introduce a variety in either the reading or acceptation of the ſame word that is written every where in the ſame uniform manner; that is to ſay, ſuch a variety of either, as is not connected with, or expreſſive of the ſame radical idea in all paſſages where ſuch word is to be found. " Beſides (continues my author) " there are none of theſe letters " which have not, according as they are " placed in different words, the different " ſounds of every one of the vowels ſome " time or other annexed to them; and " how then can they determine the pro- " nunciation of any one of them?" But who are they, who thus impoſe upon theſe letters the different ſounds of every one of the vowels? The Maſoretic pointers. We are juſt where we were then: Their authority is the only plauſible argument that

that can be urged in favour of this horrid inconſiſtency. But, by the wiſdom and care of an All-wiſe and Superintending Providence, there are undeniable proofs ſtill remaining (and we have no more to do but to open our eyes and look at them) that the ſounds or powers reſpectively of theſe letters were determined and fixed, and diſtinct from one another always, till the Hebrew pronunciation (ſuch as was in uſe in the times of inſpiration) was loſt, after the language itſelf became dead; yet not till long after, for the veſtiges of uniformity in this reſpect, that I am to bring, are of a later date than the times of the inſpired Hebrew writers. In the mean time I muſt defer being more particular on this head, as the conſideration of it is more immediately connected with the *internal* evidence of the pretended authenticity of the Maſoretic punctuation, which it is proper previouſly to examine, which I haſten to, as faſt as I can; and without further preface, I here introduce it with the Dean's fifth poſition

5. "Theſe vowel-points having been "added to the text with the beſt care "(ſays he) of thoſe who beſt underſtood "the language, and having undergone

" the review and corrections of many " ages, it may be reckoned, that this " work hath been done in the moſt per- " fect manner that it can be done by " man's art, and that none who ſhall un- " dertake a new punctuation of the whole " can do it better." Well;—the beſt of human art is imperfect, and more conſpicuouſly ſo, when laid in the balance againſt the productions of *nature*; and I ſhould, as readily as any man, have forgiven the later Jews the manifold imperfections of their Maſoretic punctuation, had they acknowledged it to be no more than a production of human art: but, as they pretend that it is of *(k)* divine authority, thereby to perſuade us that it is abſolutely eſſential to the right reading and interpretation of the Hebrew text, we may warrantably enquire what *internal* marks it bears of this higheſt of all originals. And upon this footing we may ſurely expect to find it a *moſt uniformly conſiſtent ſcheme*; for *ſuch* only would the inſpired Hebrew writers have left us on record as the unqueſtionable reſult of *uniformly conſiſtent ideas*. But I am ſorry to find (upon

(k) Prid. Connect. Part i. Pag. 471, 472.

my own particular conſideration of it) that it is the very reverſe of this; and, therefore, cannot believe any one of thoſe fine but ſpecious accounts which the Jews of the diſperſion give us of it, but the direct contrary of them all, to be the truth of the matter. A few inſtances from amongſt this unintelligible hodge-podge will no doubt be thought ſufficient to give a juſt idea of the whole. And here, once for all, I muſt inform the reader, that I take no further notice of the accents, than that I verily believe them calculated to perplex us with a *good grace*, as having the *appearance* of being connected with or productive of the unaccountably extravagant variations obſervable among the vowel-points: of which variations only (or, as I rather chuſe to call them, inconſiſtencies) I think it worth while to produce a few examples, and thence draw ſuch conſequences, as appear to me to be natural and juſt, and conducive to the cauſes of truth.

(1.) The firſt example I ſhall mention is that of the particle אֵת, which (according to the ſenſe of the context) ſometimes denotes the following accuſative after a verb active, and ſometimes ſignifies *cum*, or

or *with*, &c.—As denoting a following accuſative we find it pointed thus; אֶת (ἐθ) and אֵת (ήθ) Exod. xxvi. 33—אִת (ἰθ) Num. xxiii. 12. as a prepoſition, thus; אֶת, Gen. xxi. 20.—אֵת Gen. v. 24.—In compoſition, thus; אִתָּךְ (ἰτταχ) Lev. x. 9. but אִתֵּךְ (ἰττεχα) Lev. x. 15. in both places ſignifying *tecum*, and ſpoken with reſpect to the male gender. Now where is the determinate *certainty* of the Maſoretic reading in this particular? Or is it poſſible to read even this one little word more *variouſly* without pointing at all, than the Maſorites themſelves would have us to read according to their punctuation of it? Of what advantage then is the Maſoretic punctuation to us? This ſpecimen of it will prepare the judicious reader for the due conſideration of the ſubſequent examples, towards forming a juſt idea of it's *conſiſtency*, it's *authenticity*, it's *divine* original, &c. &c.

(2.) Further, you'll find the inſeparable prepoſition בּ differently pointed as, בַּ (βα) Num. xix. 16. בְּ (βε) Num. xix. 18.—in both places prefixed to the ſame word, viz. חלל, but though differently pointed, yet having the ſame ſignification.

(3.) Again בְּקָבֶר (βεκαϐερ) Num. xix. 16. but בַּקָּבֶר (βακκαϐερ) Num. xix. 18. in both places ſignifying the ſame thing.

(4.) And again, בְּעוֹר (βεγωρ) Lev. xiii. 4. yet in the very next verſe, בָּעוֹר (βαγωρ) *in cute.* So much for the various pointings accompanying this inſeparable prepoſition. For the ſake of regularity I ſhall now proceed according to the order of the flexible parts of ſpeech, as follows;

Examples from among the Nouns.

(5.) זִכְרוֹן (ξιχρων) Levit. xxiii. 4. but זִכָּרוֹן (ξικκαρων) Num. xvi. 40.

(6.) — מַעֲשַׂר (μαγσαρ) Lev. xxvii. 32. — מַעֲשֵׂר (μαγασηρ) Num. xviii. 21. — מַעֲשַׂר (μαγασαρ) Num. xviii. 24.

(7.) — חֹק (*hhôk*) Exod. xv. 25. but *Makkaph* is at other times made a pretence for changing this punctuation thus, — חָק־ (*hhŏk*, i. e. o *long*, into o *ſhort*) Levit. xxiv. 9.—yet behold another transformation of it, for the weighty reaſon of it's having another termination; thus, חֻקַּת (*hhukkaθ*) Levit. iii. 17.

(8.) — הַדָּשֶׁן (*haddaſhen*) Lev. i. 16. — הַדָּשֶׁן (Lev. iv. 12.)

(9.) —

(9.) — הַסְּלַע *(haſſalang)* and — הַסֶּלַע *(haſſelang)* Num. xx. 10.

(10.) — With a prepoſition, — בְּשֶׁמֶן *(beſhemen)* Numbers xxviii. 5. — בַּשֶּׁמֶן *(baſhſhemen)* ibid. verſe 9. and otherwiſe, בַּשָּׁמֶן *(baſhſhamen)* ibid. verſe 20. and 28.

(11.) — בֶּן (βην) Gen. iv. 6. — בֶּן (βεν) Gen. xi. 31. Num. xxvii. 1. and chap. xxxiv. 19. and following verſes; but בֵּן (βω) Num. xxvii. 18. and chap. xi. 28.

(12.) With a prepoſition, — בָּאָרֶץ *(baarets)* Num. xxxv. 32. — בְּאֶרֶץ *(beerets)* Deut. i. 5.

(13.) — זָרַד *(zared)* Deut. ii. 13. — זֶרֶד *(zered)* ibid. verſe 14.

(14.) But in no one inſtance does the extravagance of punctuation appear more viſible than in the word, תּוֹךְ, as we find it in it's compound ſtate with prepoſitions; thus, מִתּוֹךְ (μιθωχ) Deut. x. 4. — מִתּוֹךְ (μιττωχ) Deut. ix. 10. but in another form as far different from any of the former as darkneſs is from light; thus, בְּתָוֶךְ (BATTAVECH) Num. xxxv. 5. Jehoſ. viii. 22. Gen. xv. 10.—otherwiſe (when the Maſorites pleaſe) according to it's *natural* reading, בְּתוֹךְ (βεθωχ) Gen. ii. 9. and

moſt frequently elſewhere. I would alſo aſk why the *ſceva* (:) is placed after the letter ך alone, and not after every other concluding conſonant?

(15.) Analogous to the pointing of this laſt mentioned word is מוֹת (*μωθ*) Num. xxiii. 10. and elſewhere; but מָוֶת (*maveth*) Deut. xxii. 26. 2 Sam. xv. 21. 2 Reg. iv. 40. &c.

(16.) זְקַן (*ζεκαν*) Gen. xxiv. 2. זְקֵנִים (*ζεκηνιμ*) Zech. viii. 4.—זְקֵנִי (*ζικνη*) Deut. xxi. 4. I muſt obſerve here, that the *motion*, as they call it, out of the *ſingular* number into the *plural*, is to me no ſatisfactory reaſon why the vowel ſounds are changed at ſame time with the number; the termination ſuper-added to the *ſingular* in all ordinary caſes of Hebrew formation being ſufficient to aſcertain the number intended without a difference in the punctuation or diſpoſition of the vowels that precede the termination, and are common to both numbers: juſt as in the antient Greek and Latin, in which the termination alone diſtinguiſhes the one number from the other, and ſufficiently prevents all miſtakes, whilſt in the mean time the pronunciation of the word is in

all

all other reſpects the ſame in both. And I dare venture to ſay, this is the caſe in all languages, with reſpect to every noun or other flexible part of ſpeech, whoſe *plural* termination differs from the *ſingular.)*

(17.) — וָאֶבֶן *(vaeben)* Deut. iv. 28. — וָאָבֶן *(vaaben)* Ezech. xx. 32.

(18.) — הַתִּנְשֶׁמֶת (*hattinſhemeth*) Lev. ii. 18. — הַתִּנְשָׁמֶת *(hattinſhameth)* Deut. xiv. 16.

(19.) — כֶּסֶף (χεσεφ) Deut. xxii. 19. — כָּסֶף (χασεφ) ibid. verſe 29.

From among the Pronouns.

(20.) — מַה (*mah*) Gen. iii. 13. Num. xxiii. 23. — מֶה *(meh)* Num. xxii. 28. — מָה *(mah, a* long) ibid. verſe 32.

(21.) — The inſeparable poſtpoſitive pronoun, ךָ, *Thee*, is found pointed ſometimes with (ִ), ſometimes with (ֶ) as in the firſt example foregoing, when relative to either the *male* or *female* ſex, indiſcriminately; that is to ſay, although it appears that the Maſorites intended, or would have us believe that they intended, that ךָ ſhould be eſteemed the relative of the

female gender, yet they have often forgot themſelves, and pointed it after the ſame manner when it is the male relative; as it it is to be ſeen in numberleſs places in the pointed Hebrew text. But uſed thus *both* ways, it cannot be the right reading; nay it is more than probable, the right reading is not denoted by either of them: and it is certain, they are both of them uſeleſs, for the following reaſons; Firſt, becauſe ך of itſelf denotes ſuch a mixed blowing vis or aſpiration as is eaſily detached from the vis of any preceding conſonant by the help of an intermediate vowel, and needs no following vowel to make it audible, any more than the final plural relative ם does, which the Maſorites never favoured with either (ִ), or (ֹ); and ſecondly, becauſe ך ſtands in no need of any vowel to determine it's own gender or that of it's antecedent; the antecedent itſelf, as joined with adjectives, participles, or verbs, determines it's own gender; and to pretend to impoſe a gender upon ך the relative, is as ridiculous as to impoſe one upon *tu* in Latin. ך then is as good a pronoun without as with any point whatever; and as it cannot be thought neceſſary (ſuitably to the propriety of language) to denote a diſtinction

diſtinction of gender or ſex upon it, any more than upon *tu* in Latin, for inſtance, which without any variation in pronunciation is very properly uſed in an addreſs to either a man or a woman whilſt the context (or preſence of the perſon, &c. addreſſed) determines the ſex or gender under conſideration; — for this reaſon I look upon either way of pointing the relative ך as a very idle and uſeleſs refinemenent at beſt, and highly expreſſive of the *penetrating judgment* of our Rabbinical Maſorites, who, by all that appears, may be juſtly compared to children, who are generally in a great hurry of buſineſs, and yet doing nothing.

From among the Verbs.

(22.) — הֶעֱלִיתָנוּ (ἐγελιθανυ) Exod. xvii. 13. but otherwiſe thus, הֶעֱלִיתָנוּ (ἐγελιθυνυ) Num. xx. 5. and ſo chap. xxi. 5. — I have often obſerved ו (וּ) the plural termination of a verb either preter or future ſuppreſſed before a ſuffix, and it's abſence ſupplied (according to Maſoretic wiſdom) by their point called kibbutz (ֻ); but what buſineſs kibbutz has in the ſecond perſ. ſing. maſc. præt. which never ends in

in ו, but always in ת, I do not ſee. But, perhaps, it may be alledged, that (ו) here ſupplies the abſence of ם, the final letter of the ſecond perſ. plur. maſc. præt. and it is accordingly tranſlated in the plural number. I cannot help thinking it ought to be tranſlated as in the ſecond perſ. ſing. for in this paſſage of holy writ, the context evidently confines the addreſs to Moſes, againſt whom the murmuring complaint was made, and through him, in effect againſt God, whoſe immediate commiſſion Moſes bore. In this manner I think the meaning of Num. xxi. 5. ought to be expreſſed. The meaning of chap. xx. 5. cannot be miſtaken by any who with attention reads the third verſe immediately foregoing (i. e. in chap. xx.) where we read that "the people chode "with Moſes;" and this they might be properly enough ſaid to do, although they made one addreſs in the plural number (perhaps to Moſes and Aaron conjunctly) הבאתם, *ingredi feciſtis, ye cauſed to enter into*, — but afterwards turned their complaint with redoubled force againſt Moſes chiefly, agreeably to what is ſaid in the context, and cried out with malignant bitterneſs, העליתנו (*hengalithnu*). Nos

feciſti *tu* aſcendere, *Thou* cauſedſt us to come up; i. e. *Thou, even Thou, Moſes, art the man chiefly blameable for bringing us into this diſtreſs*, and ſo on. Hence I conclude, that this addreſs is of the ſingular number; of conſequence, the uſe of kibbutz to make the verb aſſume the appearance of a plural interpretation is an unnatural incroachment upon the propriety of the expreſſion; the verb making as conſiſtent ſenſe when read and explained in the ſingular (as I take it) according to it's original writing with no vowel-point at all.

(23.) לָתֶת (λαϑεϑ) *dare*, Gen. xv. 7 — and often elſewhere ſo pointed; but לָתֵת (λαϑηϑ) Num. xxxiv. 13. and often ſo elſewhere alſo.

(24.) שְׁמַע (*ſhĕmâng*, *a* long) Num. xxiii. 18. but שְׁמַע (*ſhĕmăng*, *a* ſhort) Deut. v. 1. and chap. vi. 4.

(25.) With regard to the formations or deflexions of ſimilar verbs, and of the ſame conjugation, tenſe, &c. the ſame unaccountable inconſiſtency in the Maſoretic reading is obſervable, as in the following תִּדְרֹשׁ (*thidroſh*) the ſecond perſ. ſing. maſc. fut. ſimple form (i.e. *kal*) Deut. xxiii.

xxiii. 6. from the radix דרש (*daraſh*); but inſtead of conforming themſelves to the analogy of this formation, or rather reading (if it is right) the Maſorites amuſe us very pleaſantly with a different reading of a parallel radix deflected into the ſame perſ. &c. with the above-mentioned, and in the very next verſe, thus, תְּתַעֵב (*thethangeb*) from the radix תעב (*thangab*). Now if our Maſoretic pointers had ſtudied uniformity in their reading, let their method be what it will, or even had they liſtened to the dictates of common ſenſe, they would either have read the firſt of the two laſt mentioned examples, the *dareſh*, in conformity to the formation of the laſt; or elſe the laſt of the two, *thithngob*, in conformity to that of the firſt: but ſuch an uniformity it was not their buſineſs, it ſeems, to obſerve, but rather to amuſe us with a variety wherever we incline to turn our eyes. So we may obſerve another reading yet in the *fut. kal*, of a perfect radix, as the following, תִּגְעַל (*thigngal*) different from both the above, Levit. xxvi. 11. from the radix געל (*gangal*).

(26.) One

(26.) One and the ſame verb, שַׁלֵּחַ תְּשַׁלַּח (*ſhallēach teſhallach*) Deut. xxii. 7. This is well calculated for expreſſing a whining jingle; but let the reader judge if the plain ſimple reading, without offering any violence to the letters as written, or ſhifting the vowel ſounds, would not ſerve every deſirable end as well, thus, *ſhalahh the-ſhalahh.* Theſe two or three examples (though of themſelves ſufficient for illuſtrating the whole) are only a ſpecimen of thouſands more of the ſame kind, in which, the true radical reading is buried under a heap of inconſiſtencies in almoſt every deflexion of the verb: and I muſt alſo obſerve, that not only the verbs themſelves, but their perſonal formatives likewiſe are thereby affected; one or two examples will illuſtrate my meaning.

(27.) תְּזְרַע (*thizrăng*) Deut. xxii. 9. but afterwards in the very ſame verſe, the formative ת is favoured with a *Dageſch*, and the middle radical with *kametz*, thus, תִּזָּרֵע (*tizrâng*, *a* long).

(28.) תִּקַּח (*thikkahh*) Deut. xxii. 6. but in the very next verſe, תִּקַּח (*tikkahh*) both being

being the ſecond perſ. ſing. maſc. fut. from לקח, (*lakahh*).

(29.) תַּחְסֹם (*thahhſom*) Deut. xxv. 4. in this inſtance the formative has patach, in Deut. xxiii. 32. it has alſo ſegol, thus, תֶּחְדַּל (*thehhdal*): ſo that this one formative of the ſecond perſ. ſing. maſc. fut. is read with no leſs than four different vowels of Maſoretic invention; which, when we conſider, we muſt neceſſarily conclude, that the Maſoretic pointing, ſo different from itſelf in all theſe inſtances where it might in all reaſon be expected to be uniform, can never aſcertain the propriety of the Hebrew expreſſion.

(30.) But further, I muſt not omit obſerving, that the pointers lead us into a labyrinth of confuſion, by ſo pointing words that conſiſt of different letters, that they are indiſcriminately read in the ſame manner, notwithſtanding the eſſential difference in their original writing; ſo that any hearer, who looks not at the letters, when ſuch words are read, might very readily miſtake the one for the other, as imagining it to be one and the ſame word that is read in his hearing. Thus according to the Maſoretic pointing, the particle בין (βην) Deut. xxv. 1. ſounds the ſame

as

as the ſubſtantive בֵּן Deut. xxv. 5. and yet their *ſignification* as well as the original radical writing of both of them is vaſtly different; and ſure I am, both theſe words might be better read *without* than *with* theſe vowel-points; the *former* for inſtance might be read very diſtinctly (and conſiſtently with the true original vis of each radical letter in the writing) βω; and the latter, βαν.

(31.) Again, we find a verb imperative Num. xxiii. 3. לְךָ (λεχα) *ito, vade, pointed* and conſequently to be *read* juſt in the ſame manner with the pronoun *dative*, לְךָ (λεχα) Gen. xiii. 15. and often ſo elſewhere, *tibi*.

(32.) And further, the negative adverb לֹא, which ought to be read λα or λη, is by the Maſorites confounded with another pronoun; thus, לֹא (λω) non, Deut. xxiv. 5. (and every where elſe in the ſame manner where uſed) cannot be diſtinguiſhed in pronunciation from לוֹ Deut. xxiv. 4. which is alſo read (and in this inſtance, agreeably to the eſſential propriety of the language) λω, *ſibi, ei*.

To obviate the natural force of every rational inference that can be drawn from the

the obſervation of all theſe and other ſuch like palpable inconſiſtencies and abſurdities in the Maſoretic ſcheme of pointing, the later Jews will tell you, that there are (*l*) myſteries in all the various punctuations of one and the ſame word, &c. &c. Very well;—be it ſo; in theſe and many others not here mentioned, nor indeed worth while to be mentioned (though they may be ſeen *paſſim* in the pointed Hebrew) I very plainly ſee myſteries, or at leaſt one of the two myſteries for the ſpeedy digeſtion of which the unbelieving Jews are moſt remarkable, viz. either a *myſtery of ignorance*, or a *myſtery of iniquity*; both of which are enemies to the right underſtanding of the word of God. Accordingly to this bungling and confuſed way of reading (either through ignorance or a malevolent deſign, introduced by the Maſorites) and to the ignorance of later tranſcribers, I impute that miſtake of the *negative adverb* לא, inſtead of לו the *pronoun dative*, which we meet with in the Hebrew text, Levit. xxv. 30. That this is a miſtake of tranſcribers is certain from the ſcope of the paſſage compared with the native propriety of the Hebrew expreſſion in ſuch

(*l*) Dr. Prid. Connect. Part i. Page 465.

caſes.

caſes. Verſe 29 treats of the time within which, a houſe that was ſold in *a walled* city might be redeemed by the original proprietor or ſeller; and verſe 30 confirms the property of ſuch houſe (i. e. in the *walled* city) to the puchaſer for ever, provided it was not redeemed within the time ſpecified in verſe 29; and then in verſe 31 is mentioned the law relating to houſes in villages which had no walls round about them. But in verſe 30 we find theſe words, אֲשֶׁר לֹא חֹמָה (*aſher lo hhomah*) *cui non* (eſt) *murus*; where it cannot but be obſerved, that the uſe of the *negative particle* really marrs the meaning of the whole paſſage, and flatly contradicts the very next verſe: for if the *negative particle* is to be admitted into verſe 30, the whole will run thus; verſe 30, "the houſe in the city to which (there "is) *not* a wall—*ſhall not go out* in the "Jubilee."—Verſe 31, "The houſes of "the villages to which (there is) *not* a "wall, *ſhall go out* in the Jubilee." Whereas the ſenſe is diſtinctly conſiſtent when written thus, אשר לו חמרה, *cui ſibi murus*, according to that elegant ſtrength of expreſſion peculiar to the antient Hebrew, of which, parallel examples are

moſt frequent, as in this 31ſt verſe, אשר אין להם (*aſhar ain lehem*) *quibus non eis*; ſo alſo, Eccleſ. v. 18 אשל נתן לו (*aſhar nathan lo*) cui dedit ei; ſee alſo in Exod. xxxii. 13. אשר נשבעת להם (*aſhar neſhabangth lehem*) *quibus juraſti illis*; ſee alſo another parallel conſtruction in the accuſative caſe, Deut. xxxi. 4. אשר השמיד אתם (*aſhar heſhamid athem*) *quos diſperdidit illos*. Both the *perſonal* and *relative* pronouns are alſo expreſſed inſtead of the *relative*, Gen. xli. 38.—Num. xxvii. 18.—Deut. xxiv. 11.—Jer. xxv. 15, &c. &c. And it is obſervable that this gloſs of Levit. xxv. 30. is confirmed by the Septuagint, S. Hieronymus, and, after them, by our own Engliſh tranſlation, and perhaps others for ought I know.

I ſuppoſe my reader is already beforehand with me in ſumming up the evidence from the atteſtations I have adduced upon this head, and bringing it to a natural concluſion, againſt the pretended authenticity of the Maſoretic punctuation as founded upon divine authority, as the modern Jews ſay. If not, I think it ſufficient to make only an obſervation or two relative to this ſubject, enabling him to comprehend the propriety of the concluſion

cluſion I am about to make from the premiſes. Were a teacher of the Engliſh language to tell me his pupil, that the article *the* (for inſtance) though always written *the*, is notwithſtanding to be pronounced ſometimes *tha*, ſometimes *thi*, or *thu*, &c. I could not be reaſonably condemned if I either laugh at his ignorance, or take it for granted that he intended to deceive me, and fright me from the ſtudy of the language altogether. The ſame inferences I would make, were he to tell me, that the words, *them*, *time*, *thyme*, *ſalt*, *ſhalt*, &c. though differently written, were notwithſtanding to be read reſpectively all after the ſame manner, i. e. *them*, as *thyme*, *ſalt*, as *ſhalt*, &c. Both theſe ridiculous aſſertions are abſolutely, and to all intents, deſtructive of the very fundamentals of all language whatever, ſelf-contradictory, and abſurd in the higheſt degree. Now, as it appears from the above-mentioned examples alone, that this is preciſely the caſe with reſpect to the Maſoretic reading of the Hebrew, how can we acknowledge it to have any foundation even in common reaſon? much leſs believe, that it could proceed from the *All-wiſe author of reaſon?* And the more

eſpecially, as theſe various inconſiſtent readings are by the Maſorites made a pretext for aſſigning different meanings of one and the ſame word as originally written; which in my opinion is a plain and direct proof of that rabbinical malevolence, which in St. Paul's days (and as much in all ſubſequent times to this day) would, if it could, have hindered the knowledge of divine truth from being communicated to *the Gentiles*. Let us be on our guard then.

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SECTION IV.

The Maſoretic ſcheme of quieſcent letters, *and aſſigning* different powers *to one and the ſame letter of the Hebrew alphabet, a groſs corruption of the Hebrew language.*

AFTER having given a ſpecimen, in the ſection immediately foregoing, of the groſs inconſiſtencies obſervable in the uſe of the vowel-points as applied by our Maſorites to the Hebrew text, I now preſume, with the ſame view as before, to offer my reaſons why I cannot put up either with the method after which thoſe Maſorites have treated even the letters which conſtitute the Hebrew alphabet. They would have us believe, that all the Hebrew letters are conſonants (but this is palbably falſe) plainly with a deſign to make us apprehend a neceſſity for their vowel-pointing; and (which is as great an abſurdity as any) they give no *vis*,

power, or *ſound* at all to the letters, א, ה, ו, י, but with the conſent of the vowel-points coined by themſelves, and occaſionally fixed to theſe letters, as the whim happened to ſtrike them. And then in effect it is not the *letter* but the point that repreſents the articulate ſound. But letters were originally contrived to repreſent ſounds; with what conſiſtency then can it be believed, that the *contriver* or *contrivers* of the Hebrew alphabet would give us *ſo many* letters, repreſenting *nothing*, and the inſpired writers uſe them as ſo many *nothings*? This cannot be ſuppoſed. Accordingly I affirm, theſe letters *are* and *always were* ſignificant, and, perhaps, the Maſorites knew ſo much, though it never was their deſign to let the *poor hated Gentiles* know it. However, we have this piece of knowledge from more creditable vouchers. For I can ſhew from a few proper examples, that theſe very letters, commonly called *quieſcents*, were originally deſigned by the inſpired Hebrew writers to repreſent and expreſs articulate ſounds, and that they are to all intents and purpoſes as good and ſignificant in the abſence as in the preſence of the vowel-points. And to make the way plain

before

before me, I muſt previouſly obſerve, that the antient Greek interpreters (our beſt vouchers in this point) always expreſs the Hebrew א by either 'A, 'H, or 'E; which three vowels I therefore look upon to be homogeneous in other words, as one and the ſame vowel in the main; ſo that according to the Hebrew idiom (which thoſe antient interpreters muſt be acknowledged to be better judges of, than our modern pointers) any one of the vowel ſounds denoted by theſe three letters may be applied to א, without hurting in the leaſt either the original propriety of the reading, or the true radical meaning of the Hebrew language. And that theſe three vowel ſounds denoted in the Greek by 'A, 'H, E', are naturally homogeneous, and conſequently that the above-mentioned uſage of the antient Greek interpreters is no inconſiſtency, may be illuſtrated from a well-known practice peculiar to the antient Greek language, which is as finely calculated as any, to pleaſe a muſical ear; the Greeks uſually change α and ε into η in the formation of the firſt fut. which is a plain proof that they looked upon theſe three vowels to be nearly akin to one another, and eaſily reſolvable the one into

the other, without prejudice to the language. א ought then to be expreſſed always according to this antient uſage; but never by I, nor O, nor Ω, becauſe there are other letters in the Hebrew alphabet denoting theſe ſounds. We often indeed find (in the moſt antient tranſlations we have) א getting no ſound before ו and י in the ſame word with it; but this might be owing to a deſire of avoiding too frequent gaping in pronouncing ſuch a combination of vowels: however, as this was a refinement of the Greeks, we have no reaſon to imagine that the firſt inventors of language were ſo nice. I would therefore ſound א always, and on no account recede one hair's breadth from the natural vis of this or any other letter as written. In this we are authorized by the following examples amongſt many others, viz. — אילן, Jehoſ. x. 12. read Αιλὼν by the 70; and again, אשתאול, Jehoſ. xv. 33. read as right as the Greeks could, Ἐσθαόλ.

In like manner, ו denotes the diphthong ΟΥ, or the Latin vowel U, and Ω, which likewiſe I look upon to be homogeneous ſounds, therefore fitly repreſented by one and the ſame letter. We muſt obſerve that the muſical taſte of the Greeks diſpoſed them

them to make frequent uſe of diphthongs; and, therefore, we need not wonder, we find the Septuagint interpreters expreſs ו by αυ and ευ; for both theſe diphthongs are founded upon the ſound of υ, and ſeem to be peculiar to the Greeks, from whom the Latins borrowed them. Accordingly we find the word, דויד (radically, Δυιδ) rendered in the Greek of the 70, Δαυιδ, and in the Latin of St. Jerome David, 2 Paralip. xxxv. 15. — and again חוה (radically HHUAH) rendered in the Greek, Ευα, and by St. Jerome, Heua; compare the Hebrew of Geneſis iii. 20. with 1 Tim. ii. 13. in the Greek, and Latin of St. Jerome.

I have alſo obſerved, that the moſt ordinary, and therefore the moſt natural ſound of the Hebrew י is I; though ſometimes alſo we find, with the ſame propriety as before, the diphthongs αι and ει founded upon it by the Greeks, eſpecially in the end of words not plural. ה the other letter numbered amongſt the *matres lectionis*, is a conſonant, to which, the Greeks have no letter equivalent, but the *ſpiritus aſper* (ʽ) will do; and H in the Latin and Engliſh alphabets expreſſes it's ſlender vis exactly enough. And here,

by

by the way, I cannot help giving it as my opinion, that the Maſorites have deſignedly hatched the ſcheme of quieſcent letters from obſerving the above-mentioned *uſages* amongſt the *Greeks* (and of *which*, I make no doubt that they made their own uſe of the examples that they met with in the Septuagint verſion) relative to א when before ו and י in the ſame word; as alſo, from *their* not writing a letter or ſign at any time equivalent to ה, although indeed *they* could not well write any ſuch, when *they* had none ſuch in their alphabet. This ſcheme of quieſcent letters behoved alſo to be contrived previouſly to the inſerting of the vowel-points into the Hebrew text; for the contrivers could not but perceive, that if they did not firſt perſuade the Chriſtians that there were quieſcent letters in the Hebrew alphabet, they behoved either to acknowledge that there were vowels in it, or be obliged to run themſelves into the abſurdity of affirming and teaching many things that are evidently uſeleſs but upon the ſcheme of the quieſcent letters. For could not any Chriſtian eaſily argue againſt the Maſorites, that if the Hebrew alphabet has vowels, it is abſurd to affirm the neceſſity,

the uſe, the divine authority, &c. of vowel-points. We find this is the truth of the matter, and it appears to me to be a moſt obvious truth too; let the Maſorites then enjoy the fruits of this ſcheme of theirs; I, for my part, cannot approve of it, becauſe it really makes the Hebrew reading quite a different thing from what the original writing makes it, and has no other property I can ſee, but this one, viz. a direct tendency to corrupt the language. Now upon the footing of theſe previous obſervations with regard to the letters Maſoretically called quieſcent, I affirm אסא (1 Chron. iii. 10.) can be as naturally read Ἀσὰ (St. Matt. i. 7.) without any point at all, and without ſuppoſing any of the *alephs* quieſcent, as when we are led by the noſe by bungling or deſigning Maſorites into the inconſiſtent perſuaſion that this word has no vowels without the two *kametzes* ſubſcribed (אָסָא) and that the *laſt aleph* of the *two* is quieſcent, becauſe *it* has no point ſubſcribed, as the *firſt* has. But I think myſelf authorized to aſk, how come they to aſſume to themſelves the daring liberty to rob the inſpired writings of any one *letter*, that they may foiſt in a *point* into it's place? Is not this the caſe with

with the laſt *aleph* in this very word, not to mention other inſtances of the like nature? And can any be ſo blind, not to ſee that this is done with a deſign to lead us out of the way of truth, to divert our *Gentile* eyes from looking at the laſt *aleph*, when previouſly engaged about the imaginary vis of the preceding *kametz?* It is a pretty conceit indeed (and let them who *can*, ſwallow it) that the firſt א muſt be favoured with a (ָ) *kametz* below it to make it ſignificant, at ſame time that the ſecond א (poor letter!) which has at leaſt an equally good title to the ſecond (ָ) *kametz* clapped in below ד, is yet violently robbed of this it's juſt due, and muſt even reſt ſatisfied with being made quieſcent, becauſe, and only becauſe, the Maſorites *love to have it ſo!* I cannot really bear this impious and bareſaced impoſture with patience, and ſhould think myſelf guilty of great impiety, and breach of duty, with regard to the veneration due to the ſacred writings, if I gave up *any one lettir* in them thus for a *point*, for *ridiculous nonſenſe*. What I have now ſaid with reſpect to א is applicable to every other letter falſly repreſented as *quieſcent*, in every inſtance of it's quieſcent ſtate. But I have

not

not done yet; I muſt illuſtrate ſomewhat more fully, by a few familiar examples, the certainty of *that ſeeming paradox* I have taken upon me to advance, viz. that there are *vowels* in the Hebrew alphabet, but no *quieſcent* letter. Let us conſider then if א does repreſent η in גבריאל (Dan. viii. 16.) read ſo—Γαβριηλ (St. Luke i. 19.) as well (nay infinitely more properly, whatever our Maſoretical men may think) without as with the imaginary vowel tzere (ֵ) ſubſcribed; and here I alſo appeal to every ingenuous perſon, if the natural power or vis of י is not *ſtudiedly* obſcured by the preceding point below the letter ר, the word being pointed thus, גַּבְרִיֵאל; and if י would not ſound as well in any one's ear (except that of a rebellious *Jew*) as the round *point* preceding *can* do. Only compare the word *pointed*, with itſelf *unpointed*, and then let impartiality determine whether or not I ſay the truth when I affirm, that in this inſtance, as in many others, alas! the unbelieving *Jews* have willfully ſhut *their own* eyes, and have endeavoured to cloſe *ours* too, againſt the truth, by giving us *points* inſtead of *letters*, that we may paſs over the conſideration of *theſe*, and implicitly follow their Maſorites

Maſorites through the *former* till we arrive at the height of their traditional vanities, leaving the written word of God, as written, behind us. Here, in this very word, we ſee two letters eſſential to the *writing* paſſed over in the *reading* (according to the ſcheme of pointing) and two ridiculous fancies of *human* (nay rather, *diabolical)* invention ſubſtituted in their ſtead. Is not this leaving the word of God to an uncertain reading and interpretation? Is not this in effect taking with violence the pen out of the hands of the inſpired Hebrew writers, and ſaying, *This ſhall not be ſo; though it be written your way, it ſhall be read my way, in all events?* Is not this fighting againſt God, and ſtill reſiſting the divine counſel with a high hand? But further — א repreſents 'E in אנוש (Enoſh, 1 Paralip. i. 1.) pronounced as nearly true by the Greeks, as their dialect would allow, and their alphabet expreſs in writing, thus Ἐνὼς (St. Luke iii. 38.) In this word we likewiſe meet with one of the homogeneous ſounds of the letter ו, viz. *ω*, or *o* of the Latins, but obſcured alſo (as may be expected, by a Maſoretic point ſet upon the top of it thus אנוֹש. We have the other ſound or

vis

vis of ו, viz. U, or ΟΥ Græc. in רות (Ρὼθ) Ruth i. 4. compared with St. Matt. i. 5.—In theſe following words alſo, the powers of the Hebrew vowels are as manifeſt as ſun-ſhine; יואל Ἰωὴλ (Ο ΙΕΡ. Β'. ΚΕΦ. ί. 43.) and in the Latin of Saint Hieronymus read thus, *Joal*, Eſdræ I. cap. x. 43. and what better is it, or what plainer, when pointed thus, יוֹאֵל, as we find it in the correſponding place of the Hebrew text? אליאב is read Ἐλιὰβ, *Eliab*, Deut. xi. 6.—מואב, Μωὰβ, Moab, Gen. xix. 37.—שאול, is rightly read (as to the vowels) Σαὺλ (ΒΑΣΙΛ. Α. ΚΕΦ. β'. 3.) Saül (properly, Shaül) in the Latin verſion of St. Hieron. i. Reg. ix. 3.—Perhaps it may be ſaid, that notwithſtanding all this, we may ſtill be at a loſs, not knowing when א repreſents one vowel rather than another, whether it is to be expreſſed by 'A, or 'H, or 'E; and ſo of ו, with regard to it's equivalents Ω, and ΟΥ. It muſt indeed be acknowledged, we are at a loſs in this reſpect, if we deſire to read the Hebrew as it was ſpoken when a *living* language; but we are at no loſs at all to read it as written, according to this ſtandard, and in ſuch a manner, as to avoid confuſion, as well as to underſtand what is

ſo

ſo written, and to the ſame degree of certainty with which we read and underſtand the antient *Greek* and *Latin* languages, which are no leſs dead at this day than the *Hebrew*. But whatever loſs we may be at, it is to no purpoſe to conſult the Jewiſh Maſorites; we are ſtill at a greater loſs, when we lean to their authority; they know no more of the matter than we ourſelves do, and what they do know they won't tell us fairly; they make *nothing* at all of theſe letters; they give us their own conceits inſtead of realities; *points*, *lines*, and *diminutive figures*, inſtead of *letters*, to make us regard their *points*, &c. and aſſign to the *point* the natural vis of the letter *(credat, qui vult)*: which indeed is nothing elſe but amuſing our fancies without informing our judgment. Amongſt other examples (beſides the proper names already mentioned to this purpoſe) they give us the following inſtances of pointing *their quieſcents*, but *our vowels*, אִישׁ *(Haïſh)* Deut. xvii. 5. moſt certainly that we may read their (ִ) and (ִ) without regarding the א and י, which the inſpired penmen recorded as of neceſſity to be regarded, and as ſufficiently of themſelves

elves to be alone regarded in like manner, מְאוּמָה *(Meümah)* Deut. xxiv. 10. with the (ִ) below the initial מ, and the dot (ּ) in the breaſt of ו, that we may not regard א and ו themſelves: but of this enough. Now if we duly attend to the homogeneous ſounds aſcribed, as above, to the Hebrew vowel-letters, by the antients (whom we cannot juſtly ſuſpect of having any ſtudied deſign to deceive us, or to keep the knowledge of the truth from us ſo far as they knew it, and could properly impart it) I do not ſee the diſadvantage of aſcribing any one of theſe homogeneous vowel ſounds to the reſpectively correſponding Hebrew vowel letters as conſiſtently as we can with a graceful pronunciation; for ſtill we may thus aſſuredly know, that due regard is paid to the correſponding *written* letters, which in conſequence of this method can never be miſtaken. Thus the laſt-mentioned example, for inſtance, may be read, *Mäümah*, (*a* ſhort) *Mâümah* (*a* long) *Meümah*, or *Meömah*, whilſt ſtill we know that א and ו, and they only, are expreſſed, and a conſiſtent dialect of the language preſerved, according to the moſt antient (and conſequently the beſt) method of

pronouncing it that we know, and that may in all reaſon ſuffice us. But to obviate all unneceſſary and idle diſputes upon this ſcore, we need only to obſerve, that a proper diſtinction may upon this footing be made between the vis of theſe letters reſpectively when they are *radical*, from what they ought to have when they are *formatives*; and what this diſtinction is, I ſhall declare by and by in it's own proper place below.—In the mean time I proceed to conſider the confuſed and ſelf-contradictory uſe the Maſorites make of a great many other letters in the Hebrew alphabet; than which, nothing can appear more ridiculous, nor of more pernicious conſequence to the propriety of the language. Sometimes they make ב an aſpirate, and nearly equal in vis to ו correſponding to *B H*, or *V* among the Latins; at other times they make it equal to naked *B*, the breath being quite intercepted by the lips cloſed. According to them, ג alſo denotes *G H* (an aſpirate in the hinder part of the palate) but as often *G hard*: ſo ד ſometimes denotes *D H* (an aſpirate in the fore-part of the palate) at other times only *D hard*; כ in like manner, and ת, are ſometimes aſpirates, equivalent

lent reſpectively to χ and θ of the *Greeks*, and to *CH* and *TH* of the *Latins*; at other times they are deprived of their *blowing* quality, by a total interception of the breath; which confounds them, the former with ק equivalent to K of the *Greeks* and *C* of the *Latins*, and the other with ט or T common to both the *Greeks* and *Latins*. פ is made equivalent ſometimes to φ *Greek*, or *ph Latin*; but at other times to π *Greek*, or *p Latin*, whereas the authors of the Septuagint verſion always (as I can remember it) expreſs it by φ, and St. Hieronymus in his verſion by *ph*. The letter ש with a point or dot upon it towards the right hand, thus, שׂ, has a thick hiſſing ſound, which we find expreſſed by *ſh*, or *ſch (m)*; but frequently without any appearance of reaſon,

(*m*) In St. Hieronymus's verſion (*Judicum* xii. 6.) we find the diſtinction betwixt שׂ and ס plainly aſcertained, and expreſſed by the correſponding combinations of conſonants above-mentioned. And whoever compares this text in St. Hieronymus's verſion with the correſponding paſſage in the Septuagint, may very eaſily diſcover, that the Greek interpreters underſtood and expreſſed the diſtinction between theſe two letters, in *pronunciation*, altho' the want of correſponding letters in the Greek alphabet prevented the poſſibility of expreſſing this diſtinction in their *writing*.

the Maſorites by pointing it on the left, thus, שׂ, confound it with ס, which is equivalent to the ſingle *S*, or Σ. Now this uſage of our Maſorites (founded upon no higher authority, than the arbitrary uſe of a ſingle dot, or *point* (.) called *dageſch lene*, whoſe date is as modern as that of the other points in general) is unqueſtionably a monſtrous depravation of the language, for theſe reaſons; Firſt, becauſe it introduces without any neceſſity a double vis or power to one and the ſame letter: which uſage was entirely unknown to the antients, as appears from the caſe of פ, which the Greeks always expreſs by φ, without paying regard to the imaginary power of dageſch; which obſervation is equally applicable to כ, and ת, always rendered by χ, and θ. From this I infer that the unvaried uſe of theſe three Hebrew letters כ, ת, פ, as aſpirates, pleads equally ſtrong for uſing the other letters as the Greeks have repreſented them, *ſimply* without any aſpiration or blowing at all, though falſely repreſented as aſpirates by the Maſorites, to give ſome colour of reaſon for their uſe of dageſch. And, ſecondly, becauſe the ſuperinducing a ſimilar vis upon two letters different in themſelves

ſelves (which this dageſch point does in the above-mentioned reſpects) makes one or other of them ſuperfluous, beſides that the one may very readily (nay, muſt of neceſſity often) be miſtaken for the other, in copying, unleſs the writer has a fixed viſible copy lying before him. But *one* who only *hears* thoſe letters thus variouſly read being the ſame in the writing, or ſimilarly read being different in the writing, whilſt *he* does not at the ſame time *look* on the book, muſt unavoidably be at a loſs to know *which is which*.

What can we now think of the boaſted authenticity of the Maſoretic reading, which we ſee contradicts itſelf as well as the more uniform voice of antiquity, in almoſt every inſtance both of *lettering* and *ſyllabication*, and all this too in the moſt whimſical, arbitrary, and ſenſeleſs manner that can poſſibly be conceived?—This very circumſtance (not to inſiſt upon the *novelty* of ſuch a ſcheme) proves moſt evidently, that the Maſoretic reading and punctuation is a human invention hatched long after the true *living* pronunciation fell into deſuetude; hatched either in the groſſeſt ignorance of the true genius of the Hebrew language, or with a perverſe

deſign to hide from Chriſtians all the remains of it that might poſſibly be picked up from the authority of the moſt antient and beſt approved verſions and other ſtandards of truth: between theſe two extremes, for the reaſons above-mentioned, I can ſee no medium, and therefore I lay aſide the Maſoretic *reading* and *conſequent acceptation* of the Hebrew text, in hopes of having it in my power to ſhew the fundamentals of a better, which prevailed many ages before the Maſoretic uſages were introduced.

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SECTION V.

The fundamentals of the natural and conſiſtent reading, conſtructing, and interpretation of the Scriptural Hebrew, agreeably to the plan which appears to have been adopted by the antients, and which is agreeable to the genius and uniformity of the language. With intereſting remarks upon paſſages wrong tranſlated.

HAVING, in as few words as I could, given my reaſons for laying aſide the authority of the unbelieving Jews and their Maſorites, in every caſe relating to the antient Scriptural Hebrew; I muſt now ſhew what better authority we are to lean to, that we may come to a ſatisfactory knowledge of this injured but moſt uſeful language, without ſubmitting our judgments to the idle and inconſiſtent whims of malevolent infidels: ſuch an authority I mean, as is founded in reaſon, and ſtrengthened by the uniform practice of antiquity, from about the year *four hundred* before, to the year *five hundred* after, the incarnation of our Saviour;

which every ingenuous perſon, whether *Chriſtian*, *Jew*, or *Heathen*, muſt acknowledge to be infinitely preferable to any authority on earth poſterior to that æra, which is not impreſſed with the like ſignatures of reaſon, conſiſtency, and truth. To proceed then;

1. Every letter in the Hebrew alphabet ought to have it's own determinate invariable *vis* at all times, that ſo it may be conſiſtently diſtinguiſhed from all others. Now in this there is no great difficulty, that needs to make any one deſpair of certainly finding out the truth. For every thing that is *conſiſtent* in the powers of the Hebrew letters are repreſented by our more modern Maſorites and their diſciples, I ſay, every thing that is *conſiſtent* (excluding all the above-mentioned inconſiſtencies of courſe) may be illuſtrated and confirmed from the authority of the moſt antient verſions and goſpels, in which, we have variety of examples to ground our obſervations upon. If there is any appearance of difficulty at all, it is in the vowels א, and ו, each of which repreſents more ſounds, to appearance, than one; though according to the ſcheme I have already mentioned (which is founded upon my own

own obſervation of the beſt of antient tranſlations compared with the Hebrew text, the uſage of language, and the dictates of nature, ſo far as I was capable to conſider them in a juſt light) theſe ſounds are ſeverally homogeneous, and in the main, one and the ſame: ſo that although one of theſe homogeneous ſounds be occaſionally uſed inſtead of the others relative to the ſame Hebrew letter, it does not in ordinary caſes affect the eſſential propriety of the language at all, provided each vowel be always expreſſed by one or other of the ſounds antiently appropriated to it.—However, to aſcertain the propriety of Hebrew pronunciation as far as is now poſſible, or uſeful to promote any deſirable purpoſe, I obſerve, that the original radical ſound of א is 'A, or 'H, of the Greeks, i. e. A *ſhort* as in *păſs*, or A *long* as in *câre*; and when א is a formative letter in derivation, it is properly expreſſed (for diſtinction's ſake) by 'E. ה Radical may be properly expreſſed by either ἐ, or ὠ: when it is the formative termination of any perſ. plur. of a verb, always by ἐ; when a poſtpoſitive inſeparable pronoun plural (i. e. relating to an antecedent plural) by ἐ alſo; but when relating to an antecedent ſingular,

ſingular, then (for diſtinction's ſake) it ought to be expreſſed by ו, as alſo before ת terminating the mood infinitive of a verb, or the plural number of a noun or participle; but by ו when it is the inſeparable prepoſitive conjunction. י is always radically and fitly rendered, *I*. And in all this, a very moderate ſkill in the language will effectually prevent all material miſtakes, eſpecially if due application be made to the antient and moſt approved verſions.

2. In the Hebrew writings we often ſee a combination of conſonants without any of the three vowels above-mentioned inſerted betwixt them, prefixed to, or ſubjoined after them; in which caſe (as conſonants can never be diſtinctly pronounced, ſo as to form a language, without vowels properly intermixed) we muſt ſupply theſe conſonants in ſuch a manner with vowels, that ſhall, upon mature conſideration, appear to be moſt uniformly conſiſtent with the *intention* of the inſpired Hebrew writers as demonſtrably *founded* on the obvious dictates of nature. Theſe dictates, as a fundamental rule (and highly agreeable to the idiom of Hebrew expreſſion) the firſt inventors of the Hebrew language always attended to in their formation of words

words or names whereby they expreſſed their thoughts, as can be ſhewn from various examples; and ſurely if they obſerved nature's dictates in this reſpect, it is to be inferred, as a very reaſonable conſequence ariſing naturally upon the footing of the ſame ſentiments, that they did ſo likewiſe in coining the ſounds of which they compoſed their words. This is not a probable conjecture; it appears to me to be a *matter of fact*; and I dare ſay, will ſo appear to every one who duly conſiders, that thoſe firſt formers of language had no other rule to guide them, no other teacher to inſtruct them, but only the *intellectual faculty* implanted into their ſouls by the Omniſcient author of nature, by which faculty they were enabled to make juſt and rational obſervations upon the powers or laws aſſigned to nature by it's Almighty author. Now ſince they made the proper uſe here mentioned of the intellectual faculty in one material inſtance, viz. the *formation of words*; is it not monſtrouſly abſurd to ſay or teach any thing contrary to the credibility of their having uſed the ſame reaſonable and conſiſtent method in another inſtance *inſeparably* connected with the former, and of neceſſity to be conſidered

ſidered previous thereto? I mean the *formation of ſounds*, without *which*, there never can be words or language.—This rule let us in like manner obſerve as well as we can, and I make no doubt of our being enabled thereby (in conjunction with the other helps left us by the antients, and mentioned in the laſt foregoing ſection) to read or pronounce the Scriptural Hebrew in great purity according to the uniformity of it's *writing*, even in thoſe inſtances in which we obſerve no vowels inſerted among the conſonants by the inſpired writers. Which uſage, by the by, I obſerve, renders the Hebrew language the moſt perfectly conſiſtent with itſelf (in the eye of unprejudiced reaſon) of any language upon earth. I muſt now illuſtrate the truth of all this, leſt it be thought I indulge myſelf in the luxuriance of imagination.

" It appears to have been *Adam's* man-
" ner in naming of things, to conſider
" ſome particular obſerved of them, and
" from that to name them: thus knowing
" *Eve* to have been taken out of him,
" himſelf being Aïſh (אִישׁ, Gen. ii. 23.)
" *Man*, he called her *Aſhah*, which we
" render *Woman*. And thus he afterwards

gave

" gave her another name, and called her " HHUAH—as ſoon as he was told ſhe was " to bear children, and be the mother of " all (HHI) *living*.—So—the Serpent, in " his ſpeaking, foretelling [or rather villainouſly pretending to foretell] " that " they ſhould have their eyes opened, and " be as Gods, Adam called him (*nahhaſh*, " נחש) the *Diviner*, or *Foreteller* of what " was to come."

So Lamech called his ſon Nahh (נח) becauſe (ינחמנו) *inhhamnu*, &c. Gen. v. 29. Thus alſo God himſelf named Abram, Abraham, Heb. אברהם, becauſe he had *made* (Heb. *given*) *him* (as) *the father of a multitude*, אב המון AB HAMÔN, Gen. xvii. 5. Many other examples of the like propriety of ſentiment are to be met with in the Hebrew Scriptures; but theſe are enough for my purpoſe, as they ſhew that this propriety is founded in the *higheſt reaſon*, the *reaſon* of God himſelf, the infallible ſtandard of *all reaſon*, by which every thing that is *truly reaſonable* is to be judged of; and contrary to which, it is not *reaſon*, but the vanity and folly of *imagination*, that can be ſet up; but cannot be ſet ſo up without great impiety and abuſe of the intellectual faculty. Now from

from this ſpecimen of the ſentiments of thoſe who firſt formed the Hebrew language, and who (on account of the frequent revelations and directions *immediately* communicated to them from the Deity) could be no ſtrangers to the knowledge of that *right reaſon* which is conformable to the *reaſon* of the Moſt High, in other words, the *image of God in the ſoul of man*; from this ſpecimen, I ſay, it muſt appear very evidently founded upon the ſame footing in reaſon, that they alſo conſulted nature with equal propriety and attention in forming their vowel ſounds, upon which the main ſtrength or audibility of expreſſion behoved to depend: in other words, they made the moſt frequent uſe of *that one vowel ſound* which is moſt obvious to, and moſt eaſily expreſſible by, the *untrained* organs of ſpeech; that which was moſt natural to any one who attempted to form his voice into a diſtinct articulate ſound, and had nothing elſe to aſſiſt him in ſo doing, beſides his own natural capacities or powers by him obſerved, and, upon obſervation, exerted accordingly. This (as I have already hinted) muſt have been the caſe of mankind in the infant-ſtate of the world, unleſs

leſs it can be made appear credible or certain that language did originally proceed from God by immediate revelation, which, by the by, I ſhall briefly conſider. That God did not reveal, *viva voce*, the firſt language to man, is plain from this one circumſtance, that when the ſeveral inferior creatures were firſt to be named, God did not impoſe names upon them himſelf in the hearing of Adam, but "brought them (Heb. *cauſed them to come*) "to Adam, to ſee what he (viz. Adam) "would call them: and whatſoever Adam "called every living creature, that was "the name thereof." Now from this account we may obſerve, that the names of the ſeveral creatures proceeded *immediately* from Adam's mouth, not from God's; otherwiſe it would have been ſaid that God named the creatures, inſtead of referring the propriety of naming them to the determination of Adam's judgment. Hence I infer, that Adam from his own obſervation formed the firſt names of creatures and things, and of conſequence, the firſt language. And that this firſt language was the pureſt and moſt ſimple dialect of the Hebrew, I verily believe, as, firſt, the Hebrew records are by many

ages

ages the moſt antient of any extant; Secondly, the primeval language appears to have been that which was ſpoken by the Patriarchs, before the Pentateuch was written by Moſes, for Adam's language (conſidering the longevity of men in thoſe firſt ages) had but few ſucceſſive hands to come through till it reached Moſes (*a*); and, Thirdly, Moſes wrote the Pentateuch, certainly in that ſame language which was ſpoken by his progenitors, the true worſhipers and privileged favourites of God, in their ſeveral ſucceſſive generations from Adam downwards. I allow indeed, that Adam, the firſt former of this language, was by his Maker endued with rational powers and faculties to a very high pitch of perfection, and with a peculiar juſtneſs and ſtrength of ſentiment in making his obſervations upon nature. In this ſenſe, we may ſay, language was given to Adam by inſpiration, but in the ſame manner in which every intelligent creature is inſpired with the common powers of reaſon, for "we have nothing, "but what we have received." How-

(*a*) See my account of this affair in the compariſon I draw betwixt the Hebrew and Chaldee, chap. iii. of my Hebrew Grammar.

ever, in whatever particular manner the capacity, the judgment, the powers of forming articulate ſounds were communicated to Adam, we ſee he was directed in the exerciſe of theſe by his own obſervations of nature.

Upon this footing then, let any one try, after having previouſly opened his mouth, without moving in the leaſt any part of his tongue from it's natural poſition behind the lower teeth, what vowel ſound it is in his power (with his mouth ſtill open, and his tongue unmoved, as before) to expreſs by extending his voice audibly; he will find it is *a* (ſhort, as in the Engliſh word *măſter*, *păſs*, &c. or as the Scots pronounce *a* in *hand*, and every where elſe almoſt, except in the end of the ſyllable, and before the ſilent *e*; or as the diphthong *au* in *author*, *fraud*, &c.) and none elſe but *a*, without altering the original poſition of both his tongue, his lips, and nether-jaw. This one vowel ſound then, upon opening the mouth and throat, offering itſelf ſo naturally (and preferably to all others) to the human organs of ſpeech, I take it for granted, that it could not eſcape the notice of ſo nice an obſerver of nature, as Adam appears

to have been; that, therefore, it was the *principal radical* vowel ſound that he and the other moſt early inventors and improvers of language made uſe of, before practice led them to others. I ſuppoſe it will not be diſputed, that the method firſt attempted by man to expreſs the ſentiments of his mind, behoved to be the moſt obvious and the moſt ſimple (*b*), by the ſame parity of reaſon whereby it appears that his firſt thoughts were ſtrictly conformable to the moſt obvious and ſimple dictates of unprejudiced nature. Now as the Hebrew language does, upon this very plan, bear all the internal marks of the higheſt antiquity (which alſo appears from the uniformly ſimple method of committing it to writing by the inſpired Moſes (*c*), and after him, by the other inſpired Hebrew penmen) it is more than probable, the primeval *pronunciation* of it was as ſimple and conſiſtent as it's writing; and that both it's *pronunciation* and *unpointed writing*

(*b*) Dr. Shuckford's Connexion, vol. i. pag. 112, & ſeq.

(*c*) Moſes died in the year of the world 2553; i. e. 896 years after the flood, according to the Hebrew chronology: ſo that the firſt five books of the Old Teſtament written in the Hebrew by him, are by much the *oldeſt* writings (and probably the *firſt* alſo) in the world.

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in the days of Moſes, and in the times of the ſubſequent Hebrew writers actuated by immediate inſpiration, and even after them ſo far down as the time of the Septuagint interpreters, were without any other embelliſhments, refinements, or improvements of human art, than what the firſt language of men might reaſonably be ſuppoſed to have received from the time of Adam the firſt inventor and ſpeaker of it to the time of Moſes, and thoſe other antient worthies after him who wrote in that language. Hence I affirm (and my affirmation ſtands ſupported upon the additional authority of a great variety of examples left upon record in the verſion by the Septuagint interpreters (not to mention others) that the *ſhort* ſound (as it is commonly called) of the vowel *a*, equivalent to the diphthong *au*, and to α of the Greek, diverſified or occaſionally intercepted by our other organs of ſpeech; in other words more ſuitable to the language of grammarians, the vowel *a*, inſerted (in imagination) and ſounded (in reading) between the ſeveral Hebrew conſonants at any time combined without any intermediate vowel letter, is the true original, natural pronunciation of all ſim-

ple *Hebrew roots*, or *primitive words*, they (according to all the known principles of truth and reaſon) conſtituting the ſtandard rule of man's language in the infancy of the world, before the human organs of ſpeech were much exerciſed in, or trained up to, a more copious and artificial method of exerting themſelves in ſpeech. And after having thus diſcovered *a* or α for the radical vowel, all inſtances of Hebrew derivation may (in a certain determinate conſiſtent manner) be diſtinguiſhed from the primitives by the help of the homogeneals η and ε; of which, the former often ſupplies the place of α in the radices; but for this no ſtated rule can be laid down; ſo that the judicious reader himſelf is to judge occaſionally when a good ſound (as we ſay) requires either the one (α) or the other (η) to be expreſſed. However, one thing ought to be carefully obſerved, viz. that always when ℵ is written in the Hebrew text, and whatever ſound it bears, whether α or η or ε, it muſt be pronounced as under the influence of accent, i. e. with a ſomewhat greater *conatus*, *vehemence*, or *ſtrength* of the voice, than when α or any of it's homo-

homogeneous vowels are read in *other caſes*, as when there is no א written.

The conſideration of this primitive ſimplicity and uniformity of the Hebrew reading, ſo well atteſted both by reaſon and antiquity, has ſuggeſted to me a probable reaſon that can be aſſigned, why the inſpired Hebrew writers are ſo ſparing in the uſe of vowels in all their writings. It appears to me, that the ſign or letter א, repreſenting the obvious radical vowel ſound *a*, has, in the original writing, been induſtriouſly omitted by the moſt antient Hebrew writers, wherever it could be properly omitted, and where it would have been ſuperfluous to write it, for this reaſon; namely, that it would naturally occur of itſelf to every well-informed reader upon the very firſt opening of his mouth without ever moving his tongue, and even *before* he extends his voice (as we find in fact that it does, in idea, and cannot be miſtaken); that what is thus applicable to the vowel ſound denoted by *a*, is alſo to be underſtood of it's homogeneals η and ε in all the proper caſes of derivation; that therefore (the Hebrew pronunciation being ſo ſimple and uniform) nothing more was neceſſary to be committed to writing, of all words in which

this vowel ſound is predominant, but the conſonants, i. e. the *ſigns* repreſenting the different or various methods of diverſifying or intercepting this obvious vowel ſound by our other organs of ſpeech. As a further confirmation of the propriety of this remark, we may obſerve, that in all words where א was abſolutely neceſſary to be written (as in the *beginning*, or *end*, or *both*, where it could never have been *ſounded* unleſs *written*, and even in the *middle* of ſome words alſo, thus to diſtinguiſh them from other words or ſyllables of a ſimilar pronunciation, but of a different accent and meaning) in theſe words we accordingly find it always written. Thus for example יאיר (Jehoſ. xiii. 30.) could never have been read, as it rightly is by the LXX, Ἰαΐρ, had the א been abſent. And again, wherever א, or any of the other two Hebrew vowels, is written in the radix or primitive, all the derivatives from ſuch radix have the ſame vowel (or, according to the known rules of Hebrew formation, another vowel as good) regularly inſerted. Hence I infer, that *where* in the original writing of the Hebrew, the radical vowels are preſerved regularly in the derivatives, there by the ſame parity of

of reaſon ought the radical reading of the ſame combination of conſonants or letters of any kind, to be preſerved invariably in all derivatives in the Hebrew as well as other languages. And where any other vowel beſides ℵ is to be read, there we always find ſuch a vowel written. (This being the caſe, the reader may judge of the propriety of the compariſon drawn by Dr. Prideaux between the contractions in the Hebrew and Latin, &c. above-mentioned, Section iii. Argument 3.) Before I conclude this head, I would have it obſerved, that when I ſpeak of inſerting vowels, whether α, η, or ε, as neceſſity requires, in reading the Hebrew words that are written with no vowels inſerted among the conſonants, I would be underſtood to recommend this antient method in the *reading* only. With regard to the Hebrew *writing*, generally by a combination of conſonants, *this*, I am convinced, and always will affirm, it is highly improper as well as impious to alter, either by taking from, or adding to *it* in any the leaſt degree. Let the Hebrew *writing* therefore be for ever invariably the ſame, that the moſt antient and inſpired writers

made and left it on record; and let us read it in the moſt natural and conſiſtent manner, according to this plan of the antients, which I hope will now appear to be moſt agreeable to that beautiful uniformity and certainty peculiar to *the ſacred language* when denuded of the contradictory conceits of thoſe vain men, who "are con-" trary to all men."

Such are the fundamental principles of that method of reading the ſacred Hebrew writings, which I would propoſe, and which the reader will find illuſtrated more fully in my Hebrew grammar, which is conſtructed on this plan. And I ſhall only ſay this much in favour of it in general, that be it the moſt antient method or not in every reſpect (and we cannot be more certain about it, than we are whether or not the *modern* method of reading the Greek and Latin languages be ſtrictly conformable to the *antient)* it leads us to a *complete uniformity* of expreſſion in the formation of derivatives from their reſpective radices, agreeably to the viſible uniformity of the writing, and the uſage of language in general; and it has all the deſirable appearances of being ſtrictly analogous

analogous to the method uſed *four hundred years* before the birth of Chriſt, which is the moſt antient we know any thing of at this day, and therefore in all reaſon preferable to the Maſoretic method which is vaſtly deficient in both theſe fundamental reſpects. In fine, one thing is certain, that we ſhall in obſerving this method read a *conſiſtent* dialect of the Hebrew language, without having recourſe to the deceitful authority of malevolent unbelievers, which is as much as we need to deſire towards the right underſtanding of the ſacred Hebrew writings; all that we can poſſibly attain to; and all that is uſeful for any good purpoſe, at this diſtance of time from the days of the inſpired Hebrew writers themſelves, when the language was ſpoken in it's original purity; of which, I have now ſhewn that we have no inconſiderable remains extant even in this our day, if we will only be at the trouble to conſult the unqueſtionable authority of the antients. This, I think, I have alſo ſhewn, that we can do to much better purpoſe without, than with, the Maſoretic punctuation, and (which is more) even upon the ſuppoſition that *that*

ſcheme

ſcheme had never exiſted; a maſs of incoherent inconſiſtent ſtuff, which for the above-mentioned reaſons I cannot digeſt, and therefore pay not the leaſt regard to.

Perhaps it will be objected, that as one muſt have a tolerable underſtanding of the language, before he can attempt to read it according to the method I propoſe; of conſequence, the method itſelf is not proper, becauſe impracticable to beginners. Be this as it may, where are we to find a method of reading the Hebrew ſo conſiſtent, and ſo evidently founded on reaſon and truth? I have already ſhewn, that the method recommended by the Jews of the diſperſion is the moſt inconſiſtent and unreaſonable thing in the world, and a real corruption of the otherwiſe obvious propriety and uniformity of the Hebrew pronunciation: and I know (as many more do) with regret, that the unaccountable variations in this pointing by the Maſorites, have deterred many from the ſtudy of the Scriptural Hebrew; which is an inexpreſſible loſs to the Chriſtian world, as without a tolerable knowledge of the Hebrew, a divine can have no other helps

to

to lead him to the underſtanding of the ſacred Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, but the ſecond-hand informations of tranſlators and commentators, which are often very defective, and, as ſuch, always made the ſport of fools, and the boaſt of infidels.—But to anſwer *more to the purpoſe*; beginners will find the method of reading the Hebrew I have propoſed, far from impracticable to them, if they will only make themſelves acquainted with the rules of grammar (as I have laid them down, not indeed upon the authority of Rabbinical grammarians, but of the Hebrew Scriptures themſelves) previouſly to their dabbling into the Hebrew books. Thereafter, when they have acquired a tolerable notion of the grammatical rules, let them then begin to read the Scriptural Hebrew, comparing every word as they go along, with it's equivalent in any approved literal tranſlation, and conſulting the tranſlation firſt. Frequent practice in this way will inſenſibly, and with pleaſure, lead into the knowledge of the natural idiom of the language, and effectually prevent all manner of difficulty in either the conſiſtent reading or writing of it from even occurring to (I may ſay) the meaneſt

meaneſt capacity. This was the method I myſelf followed, after I found reaſon to bid adieu to the Maſoretic punctuation; and, I hope, I have not followed it in vain. However, in order to aſcertain *which* of the *two methods* is the *moſt rational*, and moſt eaſily *attainable* by all capacities, let any beginner (if he is willing to make the trial) compare *them*, and then he will be able to judge on which of the two ſides the greateſt ſhare of propriety lies; whether on that of the Maſoretic punctuation; or on that of what I call the *natural* and *antient reading*, of the ſacred Hebrew Sciptures, according to the plan I propoſe. This will neceſſarily indeed oblige him to peruſe and obſerve the Maſoretic rules of punctuation, otherwiſe he can never be ſenſible of their inſufficiency: but this trouble of peruſal thereof will be abundantly compenſated in his being (in conſequence of the ſame) put in a capacity to diſtinguiſh truth from impoſture, and of weighing maturely the importance of the above-mentioned conſiderations.

3. Conformable to the primeval uniformity of the reading, is the conſtructing or ſyntax, of the ſacred *unpointed* Hebrew, both

both as to conciſeneſs and perſpicuity. There are indeed to be met with in the ſacred books a variety of Hebraiſms, or modes of expreſſion peculiar to the Hebrew, which are a little and but a very little out of the *common* road of conſtruction: yet they are uniform, and eaſy to be underſtood. They have moreover this peculiarity (founded upon their agreeableneſs to *reaſonable ſentiment*) that they are generally much more conſpicuous when conſidered in the courſe of reading as they occaſionally occur, than when ſeparated from the context they are or might be reduced into a regular ſyntactical ſyſtem according to ſtudied rules, and ſo conſidered by themſelves. All the eſſential laws of Syntax are as plain in the *Hebrew*, as in either the *Greek* or *Latin*; with this difference in favour of the *Hebrew*, that in *it* they are reducible into a very narrow compaſs; by reaſon that the Hebrew has many particles prefixed to it's nouns, which ſupply the want of *caſes*, as *gen. dat.* &c. and but very few *moods* and *tenſes* in the deflexions of it's verbs. So that upon the whole, the ſtudy of the Hebrew language, upon the plan I have propoſed, is, in a manner,

manner, nothing at all to one who previouſly underſtands only the *elements* of either *Greek* or *Latin*.

4. In conſequence of all this, it is eaſy to attain to a right underſtanding or interpretation of the Scriptural Hebrew: with regard to which, the principal fundamental rule is (and I heartily wiſh it were *univerſally* attended to) *The word of God itſelf is the beſt interpreter of the word of God.* It is abſurd to affirm (as many unthinking perſons do) and expreſſive of their own ignorance (and perhaps impiety) for any to ſay, that the ſcriptures of truth may be made to ſay any thing, as beſt ſuits the conceits of different ſects. Language may indeed be miſunderſtood, of conſequence tranſlations may be imperfect, and cavils may be raiſed (right or wrong, as the whim ſtrikes) by loquacious and vainly conceited ſcoffers; nay one part of a tranſlation that is ſo imperfect may be ſet up in oppoſition to another part. But what ſignifies all this? Does this affect the *original languages* in which the All-wiſe ſpirit of God dictated to the ſons of men? Do juſtice to *theſe*, and then this nonſenſical plea ſo commonly urged by them

who know no better, will immediately vaniſh like a morning-vapour before the rays of the ſun. The holy Scriptures are never to be diſmembered. One verſe or paſſage is never to be taken in ſuch a ſenſe as contradicts or has no connexion with the moſt conſiſtent ſcope of the context or other parallel paſſages. Any word not well underſtood or miſrepreſented by either the ignorance or deſign of tranſlators, may have it's meaning aſcertained by judiciouſly comparing it with *itſelf* as found in ſome other paſſage where it's meaning cannot be conſiſtently miſtaken or miſrepreſented. Keeping theſe few ſelf-evident rules conſtantly in view, we can no more miſtake the true meaning or interpretation of the original languages in which the divine oracles are recorded, than we can the reaſonable meaning of any indifferent (either *Greek* or *Roman)* writer within the compaſs of antiquity. And as the holy Scriptures do thus *explain* themſelves, in like manner does every tranſlation *correct* itſelf. And here I muſt not omit mentioning a few miſtakes in our own verſion, which I humbly think neceſſary to be rectified upon this plan, as follows;

1. I

1. I obſerve that ראשונה *(raſhonah)* is rightly rendered, *firſt*, or *beginning (in point* of *time)* Deut. xiii. 9. — 1 Paralip. xvii. 9.—Neh. vii. 5.—Jer. vii. 12. But ראשית *(raſhith)* Gen. i. 1. does not ſignify *the beginning*, but the *chief ſtate* (i. e. of quality proper for anſwering the intentions of the Great Creator) in point of eſſence. In purſuance of this ſenſe, it is ſaid in 1 Sam. xv. 21. "The people took "of the ſpoils, ſheep and oxen (ראשית) "the *chief* of the things," &c. i. e. the chief in quality of eſſence, ſee verſe 15 foregoing, ibid. Thus alſo it is ſaid, Job xlii. 12. (but verſe 17 in the Hebrew) that God "bleſſed the latter end of Job more "than ראשיתו *(raſhhitho)* his *chief ſtate*," i. e. of his former proſperity. And thus the Pſalmiſt juſtly obſerves, Pſalm cxi. 10. that ראשית, the *chief* degree "of wiſ-"dom is the fear of the Lord."

2. שבט *(ſhabet)* Gen. xlix. 10. ought not to be tranſlated *ſceptre* (i. e. the badge or emblem of dominion) but *tribe* (*c*); for in fact, the *dominion* did depart from Judah (as during the Babyloniſh captivity)

(*c*) Mr. Leigh's Critica Sacra, in voc.

but

but never the *tribe*, before the period pointed at in Jacob's prophecy. This rendering *(tribe)* is the general ſenſe of the word throughout the Pentateuch, and often elſewhere; ſee, among others, undeniable teſtimonies in Deut. x. 8. chap. xxix. 18.—Jehoſ. xviii. 2, 4, &c.—1 Reg. xii. 20, 21.—2 Reg. xvii. 18.

3. So מחקק *(mehhakak)* Gen. xlix. 10. cannot ſo fitly be taken to ſignify a *law-giver*, as *depictor*, a deſcriber, an engraver (ſcil. of the *(d) image* of our true high-prieſt); ſee this gloſs countenanced in Iſa. xlix. 16.—Or, *a typifier*, i. e. a maſter or director of typical rites. See Num. xxi. 18. compared with Num. xxxi. 17, 4. לא, Exod. vi. 3. ought to be tranſlated interrogatively, *nonne*, לא נודעתי, la nodangthi, nonne cognitus fui? (and therefore *they* in Egypt will acknowledge the validity of your commiſſion, when you tell them that it proceeds from that Self-exiſtent being whom their forefathers knew,

(*d*) Hebræis uſitatum eſt, leges ceremoniales vocare Kukkim a radice Chakkak, *conſtituit rei alicujus formam, impreſſit imaginem*; quia ceremoniæ Leviticæ fuerunt typicæ, Chriſtum et beneficia ejus potiſſimùm adumbrantes, *qui factus eſt nobis a Deo juſtitia.* (Mr. Leigh's Critica Sacra, in voc.)

and of conſequence they themſelves, by my name Jehovah) See לא interrogative Num. xxiii. 19 ולא יעשה, ula ingaſhah, *et nonne faciet?*

5. The verb, שאל *(ſhâl)* Exod. xii. 35.—iii. 22.—xi. 2. ought not to be rendered, *borrowed* (as expreſſing the obligation to repay) but ſimply and abſolutely, *demand* (i. e. as a juſt recompence for injurious treatment) as in other texts, as Jehoſ. xv. 18.—1 Sam. xii. 19.—Pſalm ii. 8.

6. כרת *(charath)* Gen. xv. 18. ought to be rendered, *cut off, killed*; as alſo in Exod. xxiv. 8. &c. That this verb properly ſignifies to *cut off* (i e. from life, to death; or from a former ſtate of exiſtence, to deſtruction) appears from 1 Reg. xviii. 4. chap. xxi. 21.—Pſalm xii. 4.—xxxvii. 34.—Exodus iv. 25.—Zech. ix. 10.

7. ברית (*e*) *(barith)* Gen. xv. 18. and elſewhere, does not ſignify a covenant, but a *purifier*, or *cleanſer*; i. e. *any thing that maketh clean*; as in Jer. ii. 22.—Mal. iii. 2.—The Great Meſſiah is by the evangelical prophet Iſaiah called, *a cleanſer of*

(*e*) Derived from ברר, Purgavit, Purus fuit, Dan. xi. 35. Job xxxiii. 3.—Hence alſo, בר, Purus, Mundus, a, um; as in Job xi. 4.—Pſalm xviii. 25.—fem. Pſalm xix. 9.—Puritas, Job xxii. 30.

the people, in the Hebrew of chap. xlii. 6.—xlix. 8.—Zech. ix. 11. In purſuance of which ſentiment, the beloved diſciple declares (1 Ep. of St. John i. 7.) that "the blood of Jeſus Chriſt *cleanſeth* (Gr. καθαρίζει, *purgeth*) "us from all "ſin."

8. אוב *(Aob)* Levit. xx. 27. and elſewhere, cannot conſiſtently be interpreted, "*a familiar ſpirit*;" for it originally ſignifies, *a leather-bottle*, ſee Job xxxii. 19. Hence properly, *a diviner*, or *python*, ἐγγαστριμύθος, whoſe cuſtom it was (probably by means of leather bags full of air, incloſed below their doublets, whereby their bellies appeared ſwollen) to give their pretended reſponſes with feigned hollow voices, as out of a bottle. (Leigh's Critica Sacra.)

9. ידעני (*idangani*) Levi. xx. 27. (tranſlated a *wizard*) properly ſignifies, *ſciolus*, i. e. a vain pretender to knowledge ſuperior to that which is common. Derived from ידע *(idang) ſcivit.*

10. ברך (*barach*) Job ii. 9. does not ſignify *curſe*, but it's contrary, *bleſs*. As if it was ſaid, tauntingly, Bleſs God in death! You may bleſs God as long as you can, and then die without remedy! And, therefore,

therefore, "thou ſpeakeſt (ſays Job) as "one of the fooliſh women." Thus alſo ברך ought to be rendered, Job i. 11. not, *curſe*, but, *bleſs*; the whole paſſage runs in the Hebrew thus, verſe 9, "Does "Job fear God for nought?—But (verſe "11) put forth thine hand now, and "touch all that he hath; *if not* (אם לא) "he will bleſs thee," &c. the meaning is, Job will bleſs whilſt he proſpers under thy protection, becauſe he knows thou rewardeſt his piety; therefore, *if thou toucheſt not, he will continue as formerly to bleſs thee*; but put him fairly to the trial by *touching all that he hath*, that we may ſee his behaviour towards thee in that caſe.—That אם לא is a conditional expreſſion appears as in many other paſſages, ſo particularly in Gen. xviii. 21.—1 Sam. xii. 15.—Job xxxvi 11. and 12.

11. דרך גבר בעלמה (*darech gaber bengalamah*) Prov. xxx. 19. ought not to be rendered, "the way of man with a "maid," but, *the way of the Mighty one in the virgin:* which is as direct a prophecy of our Saviour's conception, as that in Iſai. vii. 14.—The radical ſignification of גבר is, *to prevail*, or *to be very ſtrong*, ſee 2 Sam xi. 23.—Exod. xvii. 11.

Hence

Hence it is taken to denote (in the participle preſ) *a mighty one*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 8. and 9.—Gen. x. 8.—Jud. xi. 1.—And expreſſive alſo of the almighty power of God, Neh. ix. 32.—Pſalm xxiv. 8.—Applied to the *Meſſiah*, Pſalm xlv. 4.—Iſai. ix. 6. And that עלמה ſignifies, not a *woman* or *maid* in general, but, a young woman that is *a virgin* in particular; compare Gen. xxiv. 16. with verſe 43 following.—Exod. ii. 8.—Pſalm lxviii. 26. (9 *hid*, from the rad. נעלם)

12. הרבה *(herabah)* Eccleſ. vii. 18. ſignifies (not, *overmuch*, but) *a multitude*, or rather, *the multitude* (of people, viz.) See 2 Sam. i. 4. The whole paſſage in the Hebrew runs thus, "Thou ſhalt not be "a righteous perſon of the multitude;" in other words, *Thou ſhalt not affect to be applauded by the populace for thy righteouſneſs.*

13. The verb פתה *(phathah)* Jer. xx. 7.—Ezech. xiv. 9. properly ſignifies, *to perſuade*, not *to deceive*; compare Judic. xvi. 5.—1 Reg. xxii. 20. &c.—with Hoſea ii. 14. and it's context. The above-mentioned paſſage in Jeremiah thus rendered, "Thou haſt *perſuaded* me, and I was "*perſuaded*," viz. *to undertake the office of a prophet*

a prophet in the face of all dangers; expreſſes the holy man's entire truſt in God's veracity and power, and his chearful compliance with the divine *perſuaſions* (chap. i. 4.—19.) his ſure ground of hope in all even the moſt threatening circumſtances. Under the influence of theſe dutiful ſentiments, the prophet accordingly expreſſes himſelf thus (chap. xx. 11.) "But the "Lord is with me, as a mighty terrible "one: therefore my perſecutors ſhall "ſtumble, and they ſhall not prevail"— according to God's invariable promiſe, ch. i. 19. "They ſhall fight againſt thee, "but they ſhall not prevail againſt thee, "for I am with thee, ſaith the Lord, to "deliver thee." In Ezech. xiv. 9. (as appears from the context) God threatens to *perſuade* his prophet to ſpeak to the idolatrous people ſo as that they may be puniſhed by their own devices, unleſs they prevented it by their repentance: ſee from verſe fourth to the eleventh. Which judicial threatening is exactly parallel to that of the Apoſtle againſt perverſe Chriſtians, 2 Theſſ. ii. 11. and 12. "For *this cauſe* God ſhall ſend them "ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe "a lie: that they all might be damned "who

" who believed not the truth, but had " pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs."

Now from even theſe few inſtances of comparing the word of God with itſelf, I hope it will be allowed by every *well-meaning* perſon, that *the word of* God *is the beſt, the only, interpreter of the word of* God. It is too juſtly to be complained of, that moſt men, Chriſtians, as well as Jews and other unbelievers of all ſorts, are at great pains to form to themſelves a ſett of notions or imaginations, which alone they will acknowledge to be *reaſonable* articles of belief, without ever conſulting what the only infallible ſtandard of reaſon, the word of God, has ſaid. Then they preſume to judge of the divine revelations not according to what theſe revelations appear to be in themſelves with the higheſt conſiſtence and uniformity, but according to the conceited imaginations whereby their own vain hearts are actuated. This is indeed the groſſeſt abuſe of *reaſon*; this is ſetting up the vanity and pride of the human heart in oppoſition to the *reaſon* of the Almighty; and in effect baniſhing out of the world the *only ſtandard* of *reaſon*. Upon this very footing and none elſe, Jews, Mahometans, Deiſts, Pagans,

Pagans, &c. all of them, think their opinions and practices *reaſonable*, even when they are moſt *unreaſonable* in the eye of that *reaſon* by which we muſt be judged: upon this footing is grounded the inconſiſtency of opinion which prevails among, and conſtitutes, differing ſects of Chriſtians, and induces them to condemn one another at a venture. And this alſo is the reaſon why we obſerve *ſingle texts* of holy Scripture *detached* clean off from the context with which it is inſeparably connected, *tortured*, and *wreſted* moſt injuriouſly and impiouſly into *the favourite ſenſe of an upſtart party*, contrary to the meaning and beautiful uniformity of the original languages in which the holy Scriptures were written, and contrary to the certainty of the moſt important and beſt-atteſted facts. But is this behaving like dependent creatures? Creatures, who depend upon their Creator for all they *are*, *have*, or *deſire*, and muſt give an account of their conduct to him, not according to the principles of *their* pretended reaſon, but of *his*, as declared to them in the antient Scriptures of truth uniformly dictated by *his all-wiſe Spirit*. No, it is in ſhort behaving like thoſe who deſire to judge

their

their Creator, inſtead of ſubmitting themſelves to the merciful terms of his wiſdom in order to obtain a favourable ſentence before his impartial judgment-ſeat. Let us then be careful to approach to the divine oracles of truth at all times with becoming ſentiments of the imperfection of our *reaſon*, and an entire confidence and truſt in the All-ſufficient wiſdom of our Creator, who is faithful and never can deceive us. As we deſire to be informed from this fountain of ſaving knowledge, we muſt diveſt ourſelves of all our favourite notions and prejudices; pay no regard to the idle traditions or doctrines of weak men that come in competition with the word of God, or have a tendency, *directly*, or *by conſequence*, to miſrepreſent and make us run the hazard of miſtaking the *natural reading*, *conſtruction*, or *interpretation* of it;—but *take it* with thankfulneſs as we *find it in itſelf*, built upon the immoveable foundations of the moſt beautiful and attractive ſimplicity, uniformity, and rectitude both of ſentiment and expreſſion; as the *well-meaning antients* have ingenuouſly left it upon record, for our peruſal and inſtruction, to the ſupereminent comfort of our ſouls, and the everlaſting

praiſe and glory of God the author of all reaſon, knowledge, and wiſdom. To whom, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, One ever adorable God, be all wiſdom, glory, and adoration, aſcribed by all ranks of intelligent creatures, world without end. *Amen.*

6 MA 50

FINIS.